

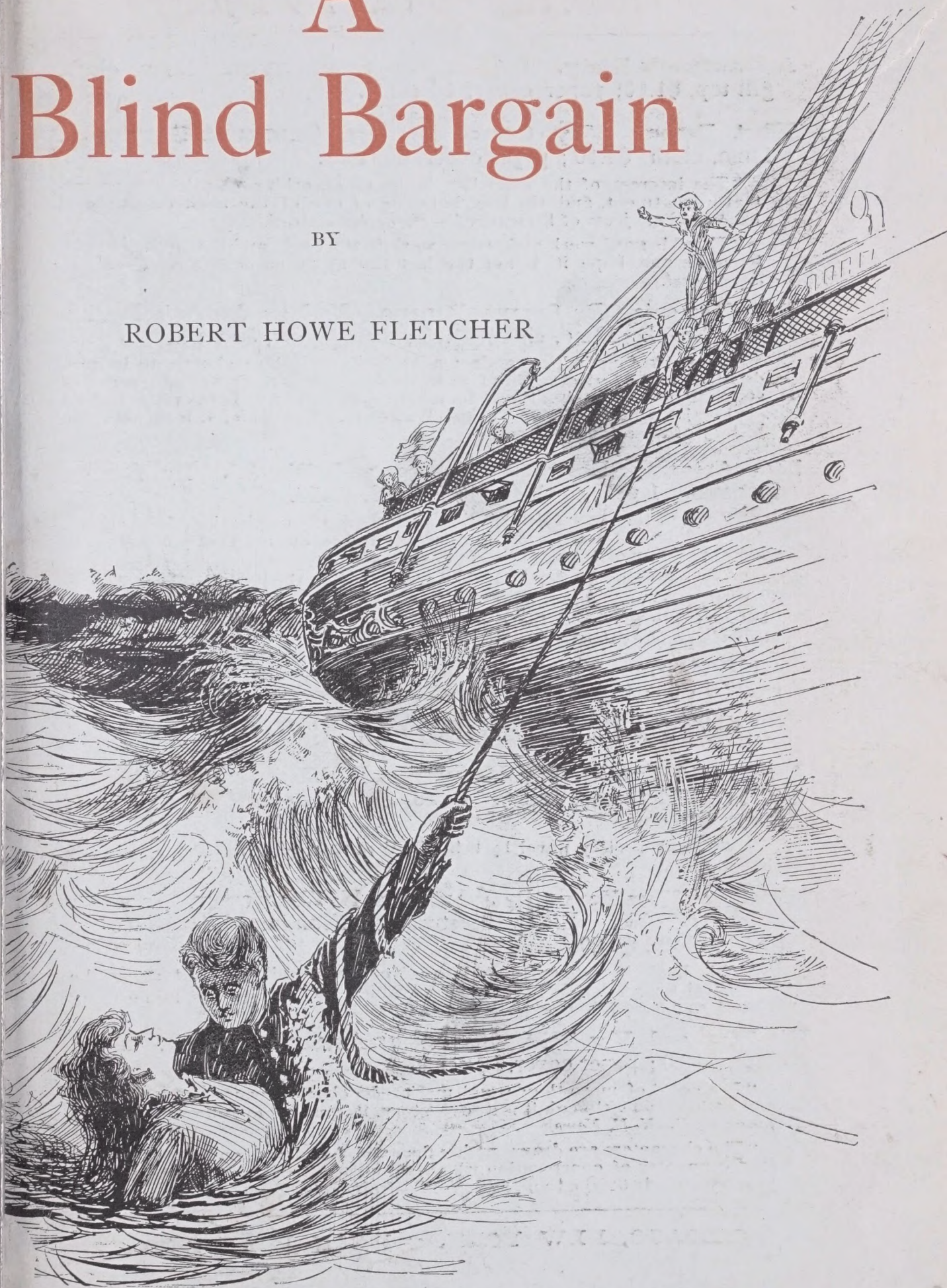




A Blind Bargain

BY

ROBERT HOWE FLETCHER



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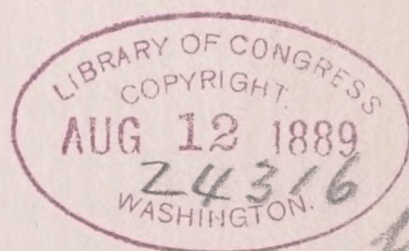
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A NOVEL

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✓
ROBERT HOWE FLETCHER



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A BLIND BARGAIN.

CHAPTER I.

CARLETON, the seat of the U. S. Marine College, is an old town, with narrow, inconsequent streets, which pleasantly balk a stranger in his desire to arrive at any spot in particular; streets which are decrepit with age, and which ramble through the place making more digressions than even Laurence Sterne; streets which are bordered with peaked-gable houses that have odd windows blinking in the sunshine, and little porches to overhang and echo back the footfalls of passers by. It was a bustling town once upon a time, when very great people lived in it, lived and went to balls and routs every evening and drank tea and played at loo in each other's homes every afternoon; when coaches of the quality rumbled between the houses at all hours of the night, conveying our pretty ancestresses all bepuffed and beflooned and bepowdered to and from the balls. When, if we may believe their chroniclers, swaggering blades in lace-trimmed coats and small clothes, ruffled it in the early hours of the morning in these same dimly lighted streets, disturbing the slumbers of honest tradesmen by their rollicking, drinking choruses, and with drunken discretion, bonneting the feeble old watchmen at sight. Shocking stories are related of the dissipation of these hard-swearing, hard-drinking, yet God-fearing, young ancestors of ours, whose bones have long since gone to dust over there in the old graveyard. But they were great folks in their day. In the State House you may learn, if you don't break your neck in the ascent to where the archives are stored, how great they were. For time has fallen asleep in these upper rooms of the State House and all is the same as it was a hundred years ago, except for the perfumed dust of the cedar wood that lies thickly over all. You may even see the room where George Washington, General of the American

forces, resigned his sword, standing with all its contents in a century's stillness !

But its glory has departed from Carleton, and now the red brick pavements which seem only to have been made for the touch of dainty, high-heeled slippers and quilted satin petticoats, are silent, or worse, resound to the slip-shod tread of a negro oyster vender. Dozing in the sunshine, dreaming of the past, it seems irreverent to disturb the old town, and susceptible strangers are inclined to walk on tiptoe as they pass through the streets, if strangers, susceptible or otherwise, chance to find themselves in the place. For Carleton is seldom disturbed in this manner, the flies and the sunshine have it all to themselves through the week. Saturday afternoon the cadet midshipmen from the neighboring Marine College having "liberty," come straggling through the town on their way to favorite haunts, and then to be sure there is noise enough for a time until they have all passed. And again, when the afternoon wanes and they come straggling back in groups, gradually thinning until the last one belated, hastens by to arrive in season for the "supper formation." And as his hurrying footsteps echo faintly down the streets, Carleton once more dozes in the rays of the setting sun. Men say that it is a dead town, but this is not true, it is only obsolete. Its old age is touchingly pretty, its quaint houses, its aimless streets, its moss-grown wharves with their scent of sea-weed, even to the sail-bespangled waters of the bay, the distant hazy eastern shore and the blue sky overhead, all are quaint and provocative of a lazy affection.

Along a broad, straight street, bordered with a brick pavement well worn by the feet of many generations of cadet midshipmen, leads the way to the Marine College grounds. Through a massive gateway guarded by a marine sentry and down a long gravelled avenue bordered by red brick pavements, and one is in the Marine College grounds. The Marine College grounds with their grand old elms whispering and nodding to that old salt, the sea breeze, as he comes back at sunset from his cruise on the bay. The soft, peaceful lawns flecked with leaf shadows, and adorned here and there with a laughing child or an egotistical fountain. With its green, shady aisles laid with white water-worn pebbles, overgrown with green wood, lonely, but for some hoary monuments crouched in ferns, or the twitter of birds going to bed in the bushes. With its characteristic buildings detached around the yard, some large

and dignified, redolent of naval lore, impressing one with a sense of one's own ignorance ; odd little houses guarded by small, brass field-pieces , handsome edifices and ancient structures ; modern three-story, brown stone fronts and all manner of buildings that greet you unexpectedly in retired places, and that glimmer distantly through the trees. Such a clever old place is it, you may saunter through its walks all the long summer days, if you keep off the grass, and meet some new, retired, pleasant feature at each and every turn. While off in the distance, is the ever changing, yet motionless marine picture of the bay, dotted with its little white sails and overhung with aerial streamers of distant steamer smoke. The bay belongs to the college. Then, to be sure, it was used, too, by certain naval heroes in days gone by to fight renowned battles on ; the college having at this moment the pictures of the heroes, done in ultra marine and ochre, with prodigious cocked hats on their wooden looking heads, as well as the tattered flags that waved above the conflicts : of all of which, battles, heroes and flags, the college is very proud.

It was a glorious afternoon in the early part of January, the light of the setting sun streamed through the naked trees, while a few adventurous sparrows noisily fluttered up and down and in and out. The last strains of a selection from "La Traviata" played by the Marine College band in the centre of the ground, dying softly away was sharply interrupted by the rattling of a drum. In response to this signal cadet midshipmen came sauntering singly and in groups through all the walks and alleys leading toward the "New Building," a large structure of modern erection, some flushed and hot from a telling pull on the river or from "batting up," others cool and calm from the library or smoking room, and others again cool but becoming warm from a disposition to "lark" on the way. Handsome fellows are these First Class-men with whom we have to do, bearded young athletes showing their four years training at every point, clad in neat fitting uniforms with gold lace badges of office bedizening their sleeves. The noise of the drum ceased, the battalion was formed in ranks on the esplanade in front of the New Building, rolls were called, the evening orders read by the adjutant in a rapid, unintelligible tone, and then, at an order, the midshipmen marched in squads through the great doorway and passed into the supper room.

As the last squad disappeared, a tall, well built young man of

some twenty-two years of age stepped out from the doorway. With his beautiful cap, not at all in accordance with existing regulations, very much on one side of his head, he sauntered down the steps and stood for a moment irresolutely biting the end of his blond moustache. Another midshipman coming hastily from the direction of the town stopped as he saw the first mentioned young gentleman and exclaimed: "I'm late, I suppose!" Then murmuring "Just my luck!" on being answered in the affirmative, he continued, "Here's a telegram for you, Arley," at the same time producing a message addressed to "Midshipman Arthur Arlingford."

"Thank you," said the man so addressed, "I was just going out to see if one had come."

"Nothing wrong?" said his friend, as Arlington glanced at the contents.

"Oh, no, my people have made up their minds to come down to the ball to-morrow night."

"I am glad to hear it," said the other, "don't forget to save me some dances."

"Thanks, I'll count on you."

Continuing his way to the row of buildings occupied by the First Class, Midshipman Arlingford entered one of them and going upstairs to the smoking room was greeted on opening the door with "Hello, old man, come in."

This polite invitation he was scarcely able to comply with for the smoke which densely filled the room. Seated on tables, chairs, window ledges and in fact everything which could by any possibility afford room for a seat, were some ten or twelve young men arrayed in dressing gowns and smoking jackets of every description, from the old fashioned, long-skirted, window curtain robe, out at elbow and with a rip down the back, to natty, velveteen coats, and each of their wearers with a pipe, cigarette or cigar in his mouth.

"Where's my pipe, Curley?" asked the new-comer, waving the smoke away with his hand as he turned over the miscellaneous assortment on the table.

The young gentleman addressed, by name Frank Dudley, but more generally known as "Curley," was a handsome, delicate lad of eighteen with close curling brown hair, large, dark eyes and a complexion which, though sunburned was as free from blemish as a girl's. In fact Dudley's effeminate beauty had, when as a

child of fourteen he entered the college, immediately procured for him various feminine nicknames and uncomplimentary allusions. It was soon discovered however that for all his pretty face and shy ways Master Frank was not devoid of spirit and was prepared to fight rather than submit to oppression. Being the youngest member of the class the odds were somewhat against him, and on each occasion that he took the field he lost, for the time being, all title to his good looks. One day, Arthur Arlingford, the oldest man in the class, most unexpectedly took up the quarrel and had in consequence a fierce encounter with a young Goliath who persisted in teasing the boy. This battle, fought behind the gas works, "Marquis of Queensbury rules," became historical by reason of its desperate character, and settled the question once and for all in young Dudley's favor. All this had occurred some four years previous in that cubbish period of the class known as the "Plebe Year." But from this incident a very pretty friendship had arisen between the young man and the boy. They had roomed together during their four years' course, and at this time their attachment to each other was become, like Arlingford's battle, historical. At the present moment Mr. Frank Dudley was sitting nicely balanced on the window ledge, holding a lively conversation with some one on the pavement below, but turning his head at his friend's question he said,

"I don't know where your pipe is. I expect you left it down at the gymnasium; I told you you would, you know."

"Here's a cigar, Arley," said a dark-faced, black-whiskered man, who sat on the table nursing his knee, an individual known to his class as "Duke" Langdon. "How are the decorations getting on?" he continued, in a tone of very mild interest.

"We shall have as much as we can do to get the rooms ready in time," said Arlingford, lighting his cigar. "There's Curley there, has not done a blessed thing but flirt the whole afternoon, and the rest of the fellows are just as bad."

But this statement was not received with favor by the committee on decoration, who, being excused from all duty were congregated in the smoking room.

"Well," exclaimed Dudley, "I like that."

"Why," said Arlingford, "isn't it so?"

"No, it isn't," retorted Dudley; "I never flirt."

But this assertion is received with even greater disfavor by those assembled than the previous one, and in fact results in a

volley of comments, through all of which Dudley placidly continued puffing at his cigarette.

"Well," said Arlingford, "I'll tell you one thing, and that is all hands have got to turn to and do some solid work to-morrow, and no nonsense about it."

"By the way," said another of the party, "did you ask the old man if we could have the statues in front of his house?"

"Yes," said Arlingford, who had charge of the arrangements for the ball, "it is all right."

"For my part," said Langdon, "I think they ought to have a shawl or something over them."

"It is too bad about you, Duke," said Dudley, catching a baseball thrown him by some one outside.

"I wonder if there will be many down," said another.

"I believe so," said Arlingford, "a lot came down to-night, and there will be an extra train in from Washington to-morrow."

"Oh, there will be a regular jam," said Dudley, "like it was last year. The Russian minister is going to bring the Grand Duke, what's his name? and the Turkish ambassador is coming, and the English legation, and all the swells."

"By the way, Arley, said another of the party, a red-haired and red-bearded young fellow named Hough, and as he spoke he winked at the others as though to invite their attention to a joke, "By the way, did you know that Mrs. Merrin was coming?"

There was a pause such as follows an indiscreet or impertinent remark made in a crowd, the reception of which is doubtful. Arlingford looked at the speaker with indifference and said, "Well, what of it?"

Seeing that his innuendo was not received in the spirit he anticipated, Hough attempted to retrieve himself by pursuing the subject.

"Come, now," he replied with a forced laugh, "you don't mean to say that you are not interested."

"I don't know what you mean," said Arlingford in the same quiet tone.

"Oh," said Hough, "you are too modest, every one knows that you are a favorite in that quarter."

"See here," said Arlingford, taking his cigar from his mouth; "I don't think it is the correct thing to bring a woman's name up in a place like this; however, that is a matter of taste. But I'll

be damned if I am going to let you use my name in making insinuations about this lady or any other, and the sooner you understand that the better!"

"Well, you needn't get mad about it," said Hough. "I was only in fun."

"It's no subject for fun," said Arlingford, shortly.

Here Dudley, who had overheard this little passage of words, swung himself down off the window ledge and as though unconscious of what had been passing in the room, said abruptly,

"Do you fellows know that the Second Class have sent for a new shell?"

The annual shell boat race between the graduating and the coming First Class, an immemorial custom at the college, was a subject of great interest, and Dudley's effort being promptly seconded by Langdon, was successful in diverting the conversation. Hough's angry protest that he was not going to submit to being lectured by any man was suppressed by the exhortations of those near him, while Arlingford, who had thrown away his cigar and arisen to his feet was quieted by Dudley and unwillingly allowed himself to be drawn into the discussion which arose regarding sliding-seats, out-riggers, spoon oars and the like. The twilight deepened and the occupants of the smoking room, one by one, gradually betook themselves to their own apartments until Langdon and Dudley were left alone.

Excepting Dudley, Langdon was Arlingford's most intimate friend and the former, therefore, felt no hesitation in broaching the subject that was burdening his mind. "What an ass that man is!" he said in a tone of deep disgust.

"What man?" said Langdon.

"Oh, that fellow Hough," replied Dudley. "What the devil did he want to say such a thing as that for?"

"Is it true that Mrs. Merrin is coming down?" said Langdon, stretching himself out on a bench.

"Yes," said Dudley, "confound her."

"Hello!" said Langdon.

"Well, I hate that woman, Duke, upon my word I do! She is the only woman I ever did hate. I never met one before but what had something about her to like, but I'll be hanged if this one has a single point. All that she lives for is to have some man admiring her. The Lord knows I'm not squeamish, but the way she goes on fairly makes me sick. She gets that cat like grin on

her face the moment she sees a man looking at her, just to show off her teeth and her eyes."

"Well," said Langdon, "why shouldn't she? She has pretty teeth and very handsome eyes."

"I don't think so," said Dudley doggedly. "People say she is so beautiful, but I can't see it. She looks to me like a cat. But it isn't her looks, it is her way that I'm talking about. If you go anywhere near her she always has something very confidential to say to you and then there is no getting away from her. She is forever laying her hand on a fellow's arm, taking hold of his watch chain or a button of his coat. Perhaps if she did that sort of thing for me alone," said Dudley, with a little laugh to cover a blush that came into his honest, boyish face, "I wouldn't mind it so much, although I don't like to be pawed all over, but she does it for every man."

"How about her husband?" said Langdon, apparently much amused at Dudley's tirade.

"Her husband!" said Dudley. "There you are again! If she treated him half way decent it wouldn't be so bad. He's a first rate fellow and yet she seems to take delight in mortifying him before people. She doesn't make any attempt at concealing the fact that she only married him for his money."

"Do you suppose that Arthur really cares anything for her?" asked Langdon.

"Oh, I don't know what to think," replied Dudley impatiently. "When she first came down here a year ago she made a dead set for him and they used to be a good deal together. I never could understand how a man like Arley could fancy her, although she didn't carry things quite so far then. You know people talked about them and I got myself disliked because I told him of it. He fires up now if anything is said about her, though I don't think he can care for her. He has such high and mighty notions about women, and she is just the one to take advantage of it to keep him at her side. She has got some hold on him and she'll never let go. And he is too much of a gentleman to see it."

"Well," said Langdon, arising and brushing the ashes off his velvet coat, "Arthur won't thank any one for interfering."

"Humph!" growled Dudley, throwing away the end of his cigarette; "you can bet your life he won't!"

CHAPTER II.

THE Arlingfords of Washington had always been gentlemen, so Sydney Arlingford, the deceased progenitor of the present head of the house, had been fond of declaring. Sydney had belonged to the old fashioned school of the early century, and his ostentatious assertion had fitted well with his high rolling collar and Southern mannerisms. He himself had certainly enacted the rôle of a gentleman as it was conceived in those days. He could drink his bottle of wine, his bow was a study, his wit undeniable, he had race horses, gambled a little, and had fought a duel. He had spent a large fortune in maintaining his reputation, lived much of his life in Paris, and finally married one of the daughters of an aristocratic but impecunious family of the Faubourg St. Germain. Bringing his handsome bride to Washington he settled down to the business of recuperating his estates. Two sons were born of this marriage, Thomas and Henry. Thomas, the elder, was in due time sent to West Point. After graduating he passed much of his time on the frontier, fighting Indians, where he gained a reputation for being a gentleman somewhat different from that of his father's day. Brave, honest and pure, Major Arlingford was indeed a gentleman, and as fine a cavalry soldier as ever put foot in stirrup. He married Catherine Ware, the daughter of the colonel of his regiment. Soon after his son's marriage old Sydney Arlingford died, his wife having preceded him by several years, and Major Arlingford, resigning his commission in the army, took up his residence in the family mansion at Washington. Here two children were born, the boy Arthur, and a girl three years younger, named Kate.

Henry Arlingford, Sydney's other son, was a different type of man from the major, his brother. He was unprincipled and profligate, but at the same time he was handsome, clever and amiable, and being his own worst enemy, everybody liked him. His brother loved him, and condoned the defects in his character—defects which in another man would have received his outspoken

condemnation. Henry returned this fraternal love in his own cheerful, thoughtless way by unloading all his troubles and difficulties on his brother, with childlike confidence. Perhaps it was this feeling of protection on the one hand and dependence on the other, which had existed ever since their childhood—when Tom had taken more than one whipping for Henry's sake and Henry had let him—that made so strong a bond between the brothers. When Major Arlingford was on the frontier, Henry was in New York ostensibly studying and practicing law. Finally he married a maiden lady some eight years older than himself but of good family and considerable means, which a wise father had bequeathed her in such manner that it could not be diverted or squandered. This lady had a most romantic passion for her handsome young scapegrace of a husband. She could not, or would not, see his weaknesses. "His was a peculiar nature," she said, "and there were few who could understand him." She resented wrathfully any fault finding with him, and as he very frequently gave the gossips of Washington, where he came to reside after his marriage, plenty of occupation for their tongues, his wife was kept ever on her guard ready to defend him. In time this irritating warfare changed her manner from that of a pleasing, ingenious person to the cold, haughty demeanor of a woman of the world—"such a contrast to her warm hearted sister-in-law, the major's wife!" said Society, complacently ignoring the fact that it had forced the poor lady into this incongenial rôle. So it was that Mrs. Arlingford, through the very sensitiveness of her feelings, assumed a repellant armor of austerity which in no way belonged to her, much as the hermit crab crawls into the shell of a mollusk. Although Mr. Sydney Arlingford, the father of Henry, pronounced his son's marriage to be the only wise act of his life, the daughter-in-law most cordially disliked the old gentleman for the very reason that he was so mercilessly candid in his comments on her husband's character. When, therefore, he died and left the bulk of his property, which after all was not very considerable, to his eldest son, the major, and to her husband but a very small annuity, Mrs. Henry Arlingford saw no reason to mitigate her dislike. Not that she cared for the money, it was the tacit censure that the will conveyed to the world that she resented. Indeed as for the money, when Major Arlingford took up his abode in Washington and the old relationship between the brothers naturally revived, he declared that whenever Henry

wanted money he could have it; and Henry gave him no lack of opportunity to put his generosity into practice, until Mrs. Arlingford hearing of it, she protested that her husband had means enough of his own and should not in any event be dependent on his brother's bounty for what ought to have come to him rightfully. In fact Mrs. Arlingford began to dislike her brother-in-law almost as much as she had her father-in-law. She was jealous of his influence over her husband, and then too, in those comparisons which people would persist in drawing between the brothers, her idol suffered. This bitterness, however, was never allowed to produce a rupture between the families. The major admired his sister-in-law's spirit, and understanding the underlying influences which were at work, was always gentle and forbearing with her. As for Catherine, his wife, she merely said: "What a pity it is, Tom, that God has not seen fit to give her children,"—a panacea, in this good woman's opinion, for most of the troubles of life. And there the matter rested until Arthur Arlingford was nine years old. At that time Mrs. Henry Arlingford's brother died—died at sea under most distressing circumstances. He and his wife had been visiting Honolulu for the benefit of the latter's health, and were returning in a sailing-ship, bringing with them their only child, Gertrude, a girl of five years of age. The ship was wrecked and Mrs. Arlingford's brother was lost. His wife and child, after being in an open boat for several days, were rescued and taken to San Francisco. Here the lady, overcome by grief and exposure, soon after followed her husband, leaving the child to the care of her sister-in-law, and with her a fortune of forty thousand dollars, of which Mr. Philip Yates, a New York merchant, and Henry Arlingford, were appointed trustees. Thus it seemed as though Catherine's wish was realized, and that God had sent Mrs. Henry Arlingford a child.

And to be sure the little golden haired Gertrude was like a ray of sunshine in the large, empty house on Sixteenth Street. Everybody loved her and petted her. As for Mrs. Arlingford herself, habitually absorbed as she was in her husband, she did not realize until long afterward how deeply Gertrude had in these early days entered her heart. The three children, Arthur and Kate Arlingford and Gertrude Alden grew to maturity together. Gertrude naturally spent a great deal of her time at Major Arlingford's house in Lafayette Square, where her Aunt Catherine's arms were always ready to receive her. If the truth must be told, those

other arms on Sixteenth Street were so unused to a child's nestling, they seemed cold and constrained by comparison, and children are instinctively critical, not to say selfish, in such matters. Henry Arlingford himself, with his childlike, irresponsible nature, was much more to the little girl's mind than her aunt, with all her devotion. But of all those who fell under the spell of the wayward, high spirited, yet gentle and loving little maid, the boy Arthur surrendered himself the most completely. He was a nomadic barbarian, as most boys are, who regarded association with girls as a sign of weakness. At the same time, his father had trained his strong masculine nature from the beginning to hold women in reverence, which teaching made of them in Arthur's mind beings of a higher and more spiritual type than men; and he accordingly showed the sex a protective, chivalrous deference that in later years was one of his marked characteristics. What notion had entered his head in regard to his so-called cousin Gertrude would be difficult to explain; it is sufficient that she exerted a very curious influence over him, and being a truthful girl, with exalted ideas of honor, a lover of knightly romances and a hater of littleness, this influence was for Arthur's good. Meantime the black-eyed, black-haired, imperious Kate, "who closely resembled her pretty French grandmother," worshipped her brother and looked on his devotion to Gertrude with smouldering jealousy which was only kept down by her own love for the slender enchantress. On the other hand Gertrude would go to extremes in the defence of either Arthur or Kate. It was, in fact, a friendship which had its effect in after life, on all three of its participants.

Mention has been made of Mr. Philip Yates, one of the trustees of Gertrude's inheritance. This gentleman, a wealthy New York merchant and a warm friend of the late Mr. Alden, took a great deal of interest in his little ward and came frequently from New York to confer with Mr. Arlingford on business matters connected with the trust, the investing of which was guided by his judgment. On these visits Mr. Yates was generally accompanied by his son Paul, who, at the time of Gertrude's advent in Washington, was a young man of twenty-one or two. In this way Paul Yates became intimate in both of the Arlingford families. Some ten years later when his father died, Paul succeeded to his immense fortune and naturally also to the trusteeship. When this change occurred Mr. Arlingford, being the older man, assumed a more

active part in the management of the trust, which, as will be seen was not altogether to its advantage. It was about this time that Arthur, now a lad of eighteen, was made happy by an appointment to the Marine College at Carleton, it having long been his desire to become a sailor, much to his mother's sorrow. When the official document arrived however, that lady made light of her own fears and regrets, and with suspiciously red eyes entered heartily into Arthur's enthusiasm. Not so Gertrude ; she utterly refused to talk over the brilliant future of her comrade or even look at the important letter. And when Arthur remonstrated, to his surprise she broke forth into angry reproaches for his selfishness and disregard of his mother's happiness. This unexpected rebuke had such an effect on Arthur, he, in fact, not having given this side of the matter much attention, that he was inclined to follow the example of the illustrious George Washington, which Gertrude had not failed to quote with good effect, and tear up his appointment at his mother's feet, but finally decided with her approval to write his acceptance instead. Soon afterward Gertrude and Kate were taken to Paris by Major Arlingford and left there to finish their education in a convent school, under the care of the major's aunt, the Comtesse de Beaugarde.

During the four years of Arthur's preparation for a commission in the Navy, and of Kate's and Gertrude's residence abroad, nothing of interest occurred in the lives of those who have thus briefly been introduced to the reader, excepting that during the last year of this period Mr. Henry Arlingford's health had declined until finally he had had a slight stroke of paralysis. From this he had recovered to a great degree, but had never regained his former vigor. At the time of the sending of the despatch to Arthur at Carleton informing him of the intention of his family to be present at the midshipmen's ball, Kate and Gertrude had been at home only a few months. The former was now nineteen years of age, tall, dark, and handsome ; the latter, a year younger, was slender, with golden brown hair and dark gray eyes. The two were always together and formed a pretty contrast and a charming combination. They had scarcely as yet made their bow in the social world, and this annual ball at Carleton, which was always an event in the winter season for both Washington and Baltimore, was looked forward to by them with great delight. In Gertrude's case there was the additional interest of meeting her old comrade Arthur for the first time since he had entered the navy, Kate hav-

ing visited her brother shortly after her return. The party had originally comprised both families, but at the last moment Henry Arlingford had not felt quite strong enough to undertake the journey. Of course his wife remained with him, and Gertrude herself would have relinquished the trip had not her uncle insisted on her going, declaring that he was not ill but simply averse to such a formidable undertaking for the purpose of merely looking on at other people's pleasure. The young ladies, therefore, departed for Carleton in charge of Major and Mrs. Arlingford, the invited guests of Commodore Tranton, the superintendent of the college.

CHAPTER III.

IN accordance with the message he had received, Arthur was in attendance when the afternoon train from Washington, crowded with fashionable visitors, slowly puffed its way into the smoky little depot at Carleton. Descrying his father's well-known figure emerging from a distant car he hurried forward in time to shake hands with him and to assist his mother and sister to alight, secretly kissing each as he did so. But when a young lady in a soft gray travelling suit of evident foreign make, placed a little gray gloved hand in his, and Gertrude, whom he had not seen since she was a slip of a child, stood beside him, Arthur was at a loss what form his greeting of this comrade of former days ought to take. As he held her hand in the hesitation of the moment Gertrude, perhaps divining his thoughts, looked up and said, mischievously, "Well?"

"Well," said Arthur, "I think may be we had better be introduced."

Kate, who had been regarding them with great interest, laughed at this and then turning to Gertrude with exaggerated politeness, she continued, "Miss Alden, permit me to introduce my brother, Midshipman Arlingford. She is quite harmless, Arthur," added Kate reassuringly.

"I don't know about that," said Arthur, while Gertrude, greeting this nonsense with a little laugh, leaned her head back and to one side, as a bird does, to get a glimpse of the tall Arthur from under the veil that persisted in slipping down over her eyes. A pretty glance it was and a pretty pair of eyes that bestowed it, and it was managed withal in such a charmingly natural and self-possessed way, that it is no wonder that Arthur felt somewhat at a loss in the presence of this transformation of his boyhood's companion. After all the idea of an introduction was not so absurd.

After the party had arrived at the commodore's residence the ladies retired to rid themselves of the dust of travel and recuperate for the evening, while the major seized the first opportunity to

slip his arm through Arthur's and carry him off for a row on the bay.

Very fond of his son and proud of him too, was Major Arlingford, both of which sentiments Arthur heartily reciprocated. He had been in the habit of coming down to Carleton every few weeks during Arthur's career there, and was in consequence familiar with all the localities of the charming old place. So the two sauntered down to the sea wall and embarking in one of the boats Arthur rowed out upon the still waters of the bay, glinting in the afternoon sun. The major, elevating his gray moustache, snuffed up the salt air laden with the odor of sea-weed and oyster shells and confided to Arthur for the twentieth time that he always had had a great fondness for salt water. Presently he exchanged places with his son and handled the oars himself in quite a professional way. But all of this time Arthur's fancy was busy with a gray veil which half concealed and half betrayed a face that he was growing every moment more desirous of seeing again. Following the line of his thoughts he induced his father to talk of Gertrude, which the major, loving and admiring her as he did, was not unwilling to do. And so the afternoon slipped away and they were almost late for dinner. Here Arthur's position at the table was not favorable for observing the object of his thoughts there being a big centre piece of flowers in the way, nevertheless he stole an occasional glance. And after each one he said to himself with a longer breath than usual and a sort of tender proprietary pride, "By George, how pretty she has grown!" Once or twice he found her scanning him, and self-assured as the young man ordinarily was, he felt the color deepen in his face.

Gertrude did not change color as their eyes met, on the contrary she seemed amused at his disconcertion. Her manner was that of perfect composure, at the same time full of interest; and after dinner she took marked pains to have him talk to her. She recalled incidents of their childhood which he had long forgotten and yet was pleased to have her recollect. Did he remember this, and did he remember that? What was that game they used to play in which they sowed something and it came up a flower? Planting? was that it? She remembered how, as a little boy he had sowed his father and he came up a poppy, and how clever they all thought him.

"So I was," said Arthur modestly.

"Yes," said Gertrude, "as a little boy. Well, I will plant myself to-night. What will I come up?"

"You will come upstairs," said Kate, interrupting them at this point, "and that immediately; otherwise we shall be very late."

"You will come up a—a morning glory," ventured Arthur, with a desperate effort.

"But," said Gertrude, as Kate led her away, "I am to bloom at the ball. Do you give it up? Then I will tell you: a *leucoium luteum*."

"Why, of course!" replied Arthur, with a pretence of knowing all about it. "It was very stupid of me not to guess that."

And Gertrude paused and laughingly said, "Thank you!" and made him a courtesy, a courtesy such as the great ladies at Versailles made in the minuet a hundred years ago, deep, profound, and with a deliberate grace that brought forth a "Bravo! Miss Alden," from the old commodore. Whereupon Miss Alden finding herself watched in this frivolous conduct, displayed a fine blush over her pale complexion as she made her escape, while Midshipman Arthur went to his quarters and arrayed himself in a brand new uniform, and discovered from his dictionary, to his dismay, that a *leucoium luteum* meant a wallflower.

It is needless to say that Gertrude had aspersed herself in this matter, for when she, accompanied by Arthur, and Kate escorted by Mr. Langdon, entered the ball-room, a very evident sensation was created; and Arthur, on leaving his party for a moment was instantly besieged by a crowd of men importuning him for introductions. But Arthur made his escape without gratifying any of them; he had reserved this distinction for only a chosen few. In fact a feeling of solicitude for the dainty Gertrude was rapidly weeding out even the chosen few, until the process threatened to leave her no other partner than himself. The part of a queen hedged around with divinity would however, have scarcely pleased a girl of eighteen at her first ball, and Gertrude with a touch of her old time imperiousness, gave Arthur to understand that he was to introduce every one of his friends; she would, herself, choose those whom she liked. And so Arthur was forced to stand by and act master of ceremonies while the music of the first waltz, for which she was engaged to him, drew rapidly to a close. Finally, when she did consent to rise, they found the floor too crowded for waltzing, and abandoning the attempt, they walked up and down the corridors, pausing every now and then to

look in upon the brilliant scene. Among those whom Gertrude chose to like was Arthur's young room-mate, Dudley, familiarly known as "Curley," and at her invitation he walked with them. Master Curley was by no means loath, and betrayed his admiration for Gertrude in his big, brown eyes in a wonderfully effective way. Only when he happened to catch Gertrude's glance he blushed and hung his head and looked at her out of the corners of his eyes deprecatingly, and otherwise behaved himself in a sort of shy, modest way of his own that was delightful for any young woman to see.

While they were thus strolling along, talking in a happy, desultory fashion about nothing in particular, glad in their youth, the music and the beauty of their surroundings, they were met by a party consisting of a lady with two gentlemen. The lady had a noticeably perfect form and carriage, with a face, which, while it was not beautiful, was strikingly handsome. Her eyes were large and dark, her lips were red, and when she smiled she showed a set of very white and even teeth. She smiled now, as she paused and said to Arthur,

"The next dance is ours, is it not?"

Arthur bowed and with scarcely perceptible hesitation replied, "Certainly, Mrs. Merrin, I have that pleasure."

"I thought so," she said lightly, "although I was not quite sure."

As she spoke she looked at Gertrude curiously. Scarcely knowing why, Gertrude drew herself up under the gaze, and made a slight movement to pass on, a movement promptly seconded by Dudley. But Mrs. Merrin turned upon the latter with a little detaining gesture and said laughingly,

"Do you know, Mr. Dudley, that as long as we have been acquainted, you have never once asked me to dance."

Curley blushed guiltily and said something about not dancing much, to which Mrs. Merrin paid little heed, being still busy furtively observing Gertrude. Meantime Arthur made no effort to manufacture conversation, and when Gertrude said to him, "I think I will go back into the ball-room now," he replied promptly: "Certainly," and with a bow was about to comply with her wish. Just then the band commenced playing.

"Hark!" said Mrs. Merrin, looking at Arthur, "Is not that our music? Yes, it is, and the 'Blue Danube,' too; my favorite."

Gertrude immediately relinquished Arthur's arm and saying, "I will excuse you," moved on with Dudley before he had time to reply.

Bowing their dismissal to the gentlemen with her, Mrs. Merrin took Arthur's arm, but ignoring the strains of the "Blue Danube" resumed her walk.

"Well!" she said after an interval of silence.

Arthur met her gaze without replying.

"Well!" she repeated peremptorily, and then continued with mock courtesy, "perhaps I have interfered with a pleasant engagement."

"You know that I am always at your service," said Arthur.

"Why did you not introduce me to that young lady?" continued Mrs. Merrin, ignoring his reply. "Who is she?"

"She is a connection of mine," said Arthur, "a Miss Alden."

"And why did you not introduce me?" she repeated.

"Because," he said, "under the circumstances, meeting casually that way, I did not suppose it necessary."

"I understand," she said coldly, with a slight curl of her lip, "you need not explain." And then after a few moments' silence she shrugged her shoulders and exclaimed, "Oh, well!"

"I would have called upon you this evening," said Arthur, "only as you know, my people came down and I could not get away."

"Oh, you need not apologize," said Mrs. Merrin indifferently, "it does not matter."

Again there was a silence broken finally by Mrs. Merrin.

"You might at least say that you are glad to see me." And then changing her manner quickly, she said with a pout and in the childlike tone she sometimes adopted, "You are just a little glad, are'n't you, Arthur?"

"Of course I am," he answered, but his manner scarcely upheld the assertion.

"Humph!" she exclaimed with angry impatience, and then continuing, "Did you say that Miss Alden was a relative?"

"No," he replied, "a connection only."

"She would be rather pretty if she wasn't dressed in such bad taste. A girl with her dead-white complexion ought not to wear a plain white dress, do you think so?"

"I'm sure I don't know," he said.

"Do you think she is pretty?" persisted Mrs. Merrin.

"I have not thought much about it," replied Arthur. "Let us talk of something else."

"And why?" exclaimed Mrs. Merrin, throwing back her head angrily, "am I not permitted to even mention this young lady's name?"

"Come, Lilly," said Arthur, "don't let us quarrel."

"I have no desire to quarrel," she said, "only you say such *very pleasant* things."

"I am sorry," he replied, gently, "I did not mean to. You know perfectly well that I would not intentionally say anything to displease you."

"And you are not sorry that I came?" she said, looking up at him somewhat mollified. "I only came on your account."

"You were very good, and I appreciate it," said Arthur. "Won't you let me finish this waltz with you?"

"Yes," she said, "though you don't deserve it."

Meantime Gertrude and Dudley had instantly become good comrades. They liked each other instinctively, and were soon chatting like old friends.

"I should think it would all be very jolly," said Gertrude, to whom Dudley, at her request, had been describing the methods and traditions of the Marine College.

"It would be were it not for the studies and the drills and the officers," said Dudley.

"Of course," assented Gertrude sympathetically. "What do you wear this gold lace on your sleeve for?"

"Because I am captain of a gun," said Dudley.

"Only one?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "but that is a big one."

"And Arthur has three stripes, what are they for?"

"He is a Cadet-Lieutenant," said Dudley.

"But that is not as nice as being captain of a gun is it?"

"Well, rather," said Dudley.

"And what do they do with you if you don't graduate?" said Gertrude.

"Then you are bilged!" he said tragically.

"Ooo!" exclaimed Gertrude with a little shudder, "does it hurt?"

"They say it does," said Dudley feelingly.

"But you will graduate very high, I suppose, won't you?"

"Oh, very?" with cheerful irony, "number one, probably, counting from the bottom."

"And Arthur, where will he graduate?"

"He ought to graduate head of the class," said Dudley in an injured tone, "he is smart enough, but notwithstanding all my good advice he won't study. He is in the boat's crew and the base ball nine and all that sort of a thing, and then he is always getting spotted."

"Spotted!" repeated Gertrude wonderingly, "how?"

"Why, you see," explained Dudley, "whenever a fellow does what he ought not to do, or does not do what he ought to do, then they 'spot' him, give him a certain number of demerits. If you don't have your room in order or are out of your room during study hours, or if you blow down the gas pipe, things like that you know; and they count against you."

"But, how can you blow the gas pipes down?" said Gertrude.

"I don't mean blow it down," said Dudley laughing. "I mean blow into it, that puts the gas out all over the yard."

"Oh, how lovely," said Gertrude, "I should like to do that, and have you many spots?"

"Well," replied Dudley, with an air of frank admission, "yes, I have a few."

"How many?" persisted Gertrude.

"If you insist upon it, I think I made up my full allowance last night."

"What for? Tell me all about it," said Gertrude with great interest.

"Well, you see, the officer in charge inspects during evening study hours to see that every man is in his room. Last night he inspected my room first and as soon as he left I just rapped on the register to let all the other fellows in the building know that he was coming."

"Why I think that was good in you," said Gertrude."

"Yes, wasn't it," said Dudley, "but I got spotted for it just the same. The funniest thing happened to Arley the other night," continued Dudley encouraged in his recital by Gertrude's sympathy. "I was out skylarking with one of the fellows, during study hours, a big fellow he was, and he chased me back into my room. I made Arley help me put him out and then the big fellow started off for reinforcements; so Arley picked up an oar and I got a base ball bat and we shut the door and waited for them. Presently we

heard them coming along playing the officer in charge and his gang, inspecting. That was too old a trick to fool any one, so I winked at Arley, and as soon as they knocked at the door and threw it open, Arley let drive with his oar. Well, it happened to be the officer in charge after all, and Arley poked him clean across the hall before he recognized him. I don't know which was the most astonished of the two. As for me, I just lay down on the bed and howled, it was so funny! It was not so funny the next morning," added Dudley, "because we both got ten spots for it. That very nearly bilged Arley, because he had more than his allowance of demerits then. In fact, I think he would have gone if it had not been for the steam house fire."

"Oh, tell me about the steam house fire, do," said Gertrude.

"Let's finish our waltz first," said Dudley.

"Oh, no," said Gertrude, "tell me about the steam house fire."

"Then I shall lose fully half my waltz with you," protested Dudley.

"I will give you another," said Gertrude, "get them to play an extra, and you may have it. Now tell me about the steam house fire."

"And will you take me out in the German frequently?" persisted Dudley.

"Yes," she said, "now go on."

"Well," said Dudley, "you know we have a regular fire brigade here. I am foreman of the Hook and Ladder Company, and it is no end of fun when there is a fire in town. They depend entirely upon the midshipmen, and it is a regular lark every time there is an alarm. You see some of us are quarantined for one thing or another, and never get out in town except when there is a fire. It is astonishing what a number of alarms they have out there. Well, this fire was not out in town until we put it out."

"Oh, please don't!" said Gertrude.

"Well, I won't," said Dudley. "Let me see, where was I? It is just like a novel, isn't it?"

"If you trifle with me," said Gertrude, "I will not take you out in the German."

"Well, I'll behave now. The steam house you must know, is a very elegant structure in the florid, gothic style. There are workshops and models of engines, and all that sort of thing in the steam house, and then there is a big Corliss engine, the same as they have in ocean steamers, and we have to learn how to run that

engine, and all about it. The watchman fills the boilers at night and has everything ready for the class that is to handle it the next day. Well, one night the building took fire. Then there was a hurrah, and the fire bells rang, and the drum corps beat to quarters and all hands turned out. The Fire Brigade rattled down in fine style, the Hook and Ladder Company with its distinguished foreman, winning the race by half a head. When we got to the building the front part was full of fire and smoke, and one of the engineers nearly lost his life by going in to turn the water out of the boilers of the big engine. He did not succeed, however, and the fire was getting up steam in the boilers, and there was a lively prospect of their bursting and blowing up the whole business. I was up on the roof with a lot of axe-men when this little tea party was going on, and then we were all of us suddenly ordered down. I noticed a crowd around one of the windows in the rear of the building, and presently some one was hauled out from the inside. Then word was passed to go ahead, it was all right, and so we went up on the roof again, and after a while the fire was put out. When I got back to my room, I found Arley there looking like a chimney sweep, and then I learned that it was he who had turned the water out of the boilers. I did not find out till the next day how he had done it. He had got in through a back window and actually crawled underneath the boilers to where the valves were. It was the greatest wonder in the world that he was not cooked. Well, the commodore sent for him the next morning, and when Arley returned he told me that they had taken off his superfluous demerits. I should think it was as little as they could do. The commodore must have given him a quantity of good advice too, for Arley unloaded a lot of it on me. And then they issued an order thanking the midshipmen for their efforts in subduing the fire, and complimenting Midshipman Arlingford on his fearless achievement, in which, the commodore went on to say he recognized the result of the good advice and moral precepts instilled into him by his roommate Midshipman Dudley," concluded that young gentleman, gravely. "I say," he added, "you won't tell Arthur that I told you all about his spots and the steam house fire, will you? Because he would not like it."

"No," said Gertrude thoughtfully, "I won't mention it."

At midnight, just as the adjacent armory had been thrown open for supper, Arthur's father sought him out, and told him that as

he and his mother felt somewhat tired, they would not remain. Arthur noticing that his father looked serious and depressed, anxiously inquired if he were not feeling well. The major then admitted that he had just received a telegram from Washington containing unpleasant news.

"My brother, your Uncle Henry," he said, "has had an attack of paralysis; this is the second one he has had you know, and I naturally feel very uneasy. I shall take the first train back to Washington, but I understand that does not leave till six. Meantime," concluded the major, "say nothing about it to Gertrude or Kate. It would only spoil their evening and would serve no purpose."

"Why, I am ever so sorry," said Arthur, "ever so sorry. I wish there was something I could do."

"But there is not, my dear boy," replied his father. "In fact, there is nothing to be done, except to wait patiently and hope for the best. So, good-by, take good care of your sister and Gertrude, and don't let them stay too late." And nodding affectionately to his son, the major departed.

"Why the deuce couldn't they have kept that telegram until morning, instead of being so zealous," thought Arthur to himself, as with an oppressive feeling of impending trouble he sought out Gertrude and Kate, and told them of the departure of his father and mother.

But shortly afterwards the floors were cleared for the German, and Arthur, who was to lead, had little time to indulge in melancholy forebodings. Having signalled the music to begin, he turned toward Gertrude who was his partner and as she rose to meet him, occupied as his mind was with other matters, he was literally surprised at her delicate beauty. Her peculiar hair, with its different shades of golden brown curled in feathery clusters about her shapely head, each little lock which had escaped from confinement during the dancing, curling up of its own sweet will, while one obstinate tress which persisted in falling over her forehead, necessitated an unconscious and impatient movement of her hand to keep it out of her eyes. Her delicate complexion was more transparent than ever, through fatigue, her cheeks were flushed, and her dark, gray eyes were lit up with the excitement of her first ball, while the shadows underneath caused by the unusual dissipation, added to their brilliancy. Her girlish figure too, in a simple white dress had all the charming, innocent grace that nature

bestows alone on dawning womanhood. As she moved off with Arthur to the slow music, he said gravely,

"Miss Alden, you are a poem."

"Because I am read?" said Gertrude, quickly. Then she laughed and said, "Am I flippant? Well then, it is only because I do not like to have you try to pay me compliments."

"I won't do it any more," said Arthur submissively.

And he was thanked by a glance from her eyes as they separated before she had time to reply. Then she proceeded to make Dudley happy by leading him out in the course of the figure. And after this she was not allowed by the many eager claimants for her hand, to resume her seat for a moment.

One by one sleepy chaperones had delegated their duties and retired, or succumbed to fatigue in secluded corners, and still the fascinating German continues. Tired, unconsciously but painfully tired, the satin-shod feet still move over the floor, the rich dresses sweeping in graceful curves as their young owners move in rhythmic motion, unwilling to leave this beautiful retreat with its soft strains of music and its delightful memories of past hours, unwilling to acknowledge the real world which has grown a dim memory. But ah, my dears, how pale your faces look! What strange light is it, that is creeping into the room? Surely it is not a flattering one; what can the committee be thinking of! And those evergreens too, why are they seared and yellow, and the water in the fountain strikes a chill to one's blood. What a stony stare have these decorations and the hot-house flowers, what a disagreeable odor! Why, to be sure, they are withered and dead, so! All the bright forms are departing. See, there goes the last hooded figure past the door. The stolid German musicians muffle up their fiddles in black cloths, place in its coffin the bass viol, and talking in guttural tones stump through the vacant chamber and are gone. The cold, gray light of early dawn searches out bits of lace, dropped flowers and neglected "favors," and ruthlessly exposes them to the unsympathetic gaze of the hollow-eyed alcoves.

CHAPTER IV.

HAVING escorted their charges home and left them at the door with a whispered "good-night," Arthur and Langdon strolled back to their quarters smoking and chatting in the cool, still morning.

Arthur had forgotten, for the time being, his uncle's illness and his father's abrupt departure from the ball. When, therefore, he opened the door of his room, he was surprised to find the major sitting there alone, looking pale and aged in the dim, gray light. He had evidently not been to bed that night, and Arthur's conscience smote him at sight of the sad and lonely figure. His father's thoughtful kindness in retaining the sorrowful news that their evening enjoyment might be undisturbed, while he went off alone to keep a solitary vigil, struck Arthur forcibly and made him feel ashamed and angry with himself for the poor return he had made in dancing till the last minute.

"Father!" he exclaimed, "I had no idea that you were sitting up, waiting for me, or I should not have stayed so late. Why did you not let me know?"

Then the deep dejection of his father's attitude and the expression of his face as he looked up, began to impress Arthur with vague uneasiness and caused him to add hastily, "Have you heard anything more from Uncle Henry?"

The major slowly shook his head, not as though in reply, but as if overcome by emotion he was unable to repress. Then Arthur, thoroughly alarmed, stepped forward and putting his hand on his father's shoulder, said, "Father! what is the matter? How is Uncle Henry?"

"My dear boy," said the major, lifting his reddened eyes to Arthur's face, "he is dead!"

"Dead!" cried Arthur, dazed by the unreal events of the preceding hours and unable to realize this sudden and incongruous tragedy. "Dead!" he repeated. And then as he gazed upon his father's bowed figure, the truth was borne in upon him. He had

seen too little of his uncle to be greatly affected by his loss, but his father's woe appealed to him most forcibly. Pausing for a moment at a loss what to do, the tender affection he felt for the grief stricken man before him suddenly swept aside all thought. Involuntarily he sank upon his knee and slipping his arm around his father's neck he leaned over him and whispered, "My dear old father, I am sorry, so very, very sorry."

Then in the silence which followed, he felt how tame and commonplace were the words he had uttered. The major without making any response, continued to sit leaning forward, his arms resting on his knees and his hands, drooping listlessly while his eyes gazed dimly at the floor. As he looked at his father Arthur saw that his eyelids were red and that his mouth quivered as he caught the end of his great, gray moustache between his teeth and released it with a little nervous movement. And while his heart was filled with sympathy he secretly wondered at all this. He had never thought that any one near or dear to him was liable to such tragedies. That death should come to other people, was a matter of course, but that it should strike so near him was bewildering. Furthermore he had grown up from childhood with an unconscious reliance in the superiority and infallibility of his father, with a feeling that he was not subject to the ills and weaknesses of ordinary mortals. This exhibition of intense grief was, therefore, all the more shocking. Each moment Arthur felt less and less able to express his sympathy, and this inability to comfort him, this being a silent spectator of his father's emotion, grew more and more painful. Finally as his thoughts travelled back over the events of the evening and returned again to this tragical termination, Arthur broke the silence by exclaiming in a tone of reproach, "Father, why did you not send for me!"

Then the major arose wearily and walking to the window stood with his back toward his son. After a moment's silence he replied in a low voice, "I only knew of it half an hour ago. After I left you, I went to the telegraph office, and the young man in charge was very kind and offered to keep the office open for me. In that way, I received word every hour until—" and here the major's voice faltered. "I went over to the commodore's house to let your mother know," he continued presently, "so that she could break the news to Gertrude. Poor little girl, it will be a sad termination of her party! She was very fond of him."

And the poor gentleman pressed his hand over his eyes. Presently he turned toward Arthur and exclaimed impatiently,

“Well, well, we are losing time! I have seen the commodore and got a four days’ furlough for you, so that you can go back with us. The train leaves at six, so change your clothes and come over to the house as soon as you can.” And so saying, he strode away.

Relieved at having something to do, Arthur, in a very few moments equipped himself for the journey, and leaving a note on the pincushion explaining his departure to Dudley, who had not yet returned, he betook himself to the commodore’s house.

That was a strange journey that they were so unexpectedly required to make, creeping away from the night’s festivities like guilty ghosts in the early dawn, gliding through the gray, misty landscape, on their way from a dance to a funeral. There was an unreality about it that checked familiar intercourse. Lost to their surroundings, each one of the party was a prey to his or her own thoughts. Arthur was perhaps freest from this influence. Long absence from home had made his uncle a virtual stranger to him, while what little he had seen or heard of him was not of a character, in the absence of affection, to create regret. While he was impressed by the event, Arthur’s nature was not one to entertain any sentimental grief that he did not actually feel. He was unaffectedly sorry for those who were afflicted, for Gertrude, and especially for his father.

If the truth were known, his mother’s tears were due almost entirely to the same feeling. The remorse she felt for having sometimes spoken with severity of the man who was now dead was swallowed up in her grief for her husband, and as she furtively noted how pale and sad he looked, she became angry and indignant with life for serving him so.

As for Gertrude, she sat in a corner of the car with a veil down over her face, while occasionally she drew her handkerchief to dry the tears that stole down her cheeks, as in her retrospect she remembered some kindly word or affectionate act of the uncle who was gone. Some kindly word or affectionate act, trifling in themselves, but standing out brilliantly now against the background of his death and throwing all else of evil into undistinguishable shadow.

CHAPTER V.

THE same gray, windy dawn that had robbed the ball-room of its enchantment, stole into the chamber where lay all that remained of Henry Arlingford, and stripping it of the mystery of the night, left it a desolate reality. Kneeling beside the bed, apparently overcome by sleep, with her head buried in her arms and her whole attitude one of utter abandonment to grief, crouched the dead man's wife. The stillness of early morning was being broken by the distant rumbling of omnibuses and wagons indicating the arrival of a train, noises of returning life which emphasized the stillness of the death chamber. Presently a carriage rattling through the empty street stopped in front of the house. Mrs. Arlingford moved, raised her head languidly and putting her dishevelled gray hair away from her eyes, listened with a dazed expression. A bell rang noisily through the silence. She arose stiffly to her feet, and arranging her dress stepped into the hall and leaning over the balustrade, listened as a servant opened the front door and spoke a few words with the person outside. Passing with trembling limbs down the stairs, she said, "Is that Mr. Yates?" and on being answered in the affirmative, she added, "Show him into the library," and entering that room herself, she was soon joined by the gentleman who had just arrived.

This person, Mr. Paul Yates, it will be remembered, was the son of Philip Yates, who had been originally appointed one of the trustees of Gertrude's fortune. When quite a young man he had accompanied his father on his visits to Washington and had, after his father's death, been appointed his successor in conjunction with the deceased Henry Arlingford. Since Gertrude's return from Europe he had spent a great deal of his time in Washington, and was consequently on familiar terms with Mrs. Arlingford. As he stands before the bereaved lady, with his hat in his hand, Paul Yates appears to be a man of about thirty-four years of age, is rather short, though well-built, has dark hair and eyes and what is

termed a muddy complexion, while his manner is nervous, restless and ill at ease, even bordering on the suspicious. It is this unhappy manner which causes him to be occasionally spoken of as "poor old Yates." Compounded of discordant elements, he was a man who invoked a sort of tolerant pity in the best balanced minds, while very often he was spoken of thus sneeringly by men who had not one-half his sterling qualities. His most unfortunate characteristic was extreme egotism—an egotism that was not the result of vanity but rather of an over sensitive appreciation of his own deficiencies. He talked constantly of himself, but it was with a desire to talk himself up to the standard he knew that he fell short of. The pronoun *I* was the weapon with which he was perpetually defending himself from imagined derogatory opinions. Of course his constant effort to place himself on a level in this way with other men only resulted in putting him at a greater disadvantage. Being exceedingly sensitive, he found a personal allusion in the most general remarks. Necessarily, then, he would often detect what he believed to be slighting allusions to himself, and, as he had a quick temper, he would sometimes astonish his associates by publicly resenting such remarks. As a consequence, he was a man debarred of friendship, for friendship involves a free interchange of opinion, and that with Yates involved a quarrel. A man of moods, he would betake himself off alone and recalling some imagined slight would brood upon it until it grew to such proportions that, meeting the person who had incurred his resentment, he would cross the street to avoid him or pass him by without greeting. These whims, however, were always short-lived, and were generally followed by an apologetic attempt at conciliation, more or less embarrassed. Finally, Paul Yates was truthful, honest, and when not warped by his vagaries and passions, he was kind-hearted and generous. It was by these latter traits only that Mrs. Arlingford knew him.

Advancing to where the widow stood in the shadow of the curtain, Mr. Yates rather awkwardly tendered her his sympathy. Stifling the emotion which arose at the mention of her husband's death, she thanked him in a low tone and then continued, "It was very kind of you to come so promptly, Paul."

"Oh," protested Yates, interrupting her, "it was nothing, I was thinking about coming to Washington any way."

"It was very kind of you," continued Mrs. Arlingford slowly, struggling to preserve her composure. Her tone seemed

strangely conciliatory, almost deprecatory. "Won't you sit down?" she continued, "the servant will bring some coffee in a few moments. You must be tired after your night's journey."

"Thank you, I am sure, but I won't stay," said Yates, keeping his hat in his hand, "I came here directly from the depot, as you asked me in the despatch, but, of course—"

As he hesitated, Mrs. Arlingford said, "Yes, we both hoped so much that you might be in time. But you will stay for a few minutes," she continued, as Yates still remained standing. "I need your advice and assistance on a matter of some importance. It will not detain you long."

"Oh, of course," said Yates, "anything that I can do, I am sure that I shall be most happy."

"It is about Gertrude's fortune," continued Mrs. Arlingford, with an effort. "He hoped so much that he would be able to talk with you about it."

"Why, that is all right," said Mr. Yates reassuringly, "it was not necessary at all; I suppose he wanted to consult me about his successor, but there is no hurry about it." Then as a silence ensued, and Yates dreaded an exhibition of grief he continued hurriedly, "Did he suggest any one?"

"No," replied the lady biting her lips nervously, "no, no one." She was laboring under intense excitement, which, after the exhaustion of the past night, she was scarcely able to control. Mr. Yates, however, relieved at being able to converse on ordinary business topics, did not notice this.

"Oh, well," he said, "it is of no consequence; we can arrange all that after a while without any trouble. There is no necessity of talking about it now."

"No," assented Mrs. Arlingford, doubtfully, her voice trembling in spite of her efforts, "no, but, I am afraid—I don't know—I am afraid that Mr. Arlingford has been unfortunate in some of his investments of Gertrude's fortune, Paul."

"What!" exclaimed that gentleman, putting down the cup of coffee he was in the act of raising to his lips. And then in a reassured voice he continued, "But that is impossible, you know, because not more than a year ago we invested the money in stock that is higher to-day than it has ever been before."

Despite this assurance, however, Mr. Yates was evidently disturbed and awaited suspiciously for a reply.

"I think he had reason to doubt the safety of the stock," the

lady answered almost inaudibly, "and disposed of it in something else. That is why I was anxious to see you about it first."

"But, my dear madam," exclaimed Mr. Yates, arising and setting the cup down, "he had no right to do that, you know, without first consulting me! There is some mistake about that, you must be mistaken. Perhaps," he added, as Mrs. Arlingford made no answer, "perhaps it would be as well for me to go and make a few inquiries."

Stepping quickly to his side as he turned toward the door, Mrs. Arlingford laid her hand on his arm with a gesture of command. "Stop!" she said, and then softening her voice she continued, "not yet, I beg of you! Sit down, I will detain you only a moment."

But Mr. Yates did not resume his seat, and Mrs. Arlingford remained standing between him and the door, looking gaunt and haggard in the early sunlight which was now streaming full upon her.

"Mr. Yates," she said, while the blood mounted slowly to her sallow cheeks, "you know that my husband was an honorable man."

Whatever doubts Mr. Yates may have had, he did not give them expression, but replied hurriedly, "Oh certainly, of course, I did not—"

"No one," she interrupted him, "ever dared utter a word against his integrity while he lived, and please God," she cried, losing control of herself for a moment, "no one shall call his honor in question now that he is dead! Whatever he has done it was with the purest and best intentions! Do you hear?" she said defiantly. "The purest and best intentions! What has been lost was lost through—through," but here she faltered, and then whispering hysterically, "Oh, my God!" she wrung her hands and looked helplessly around while the tears welled slowly into her dim eyes and trickled one by one down her furrowed cheeks.

"There, there," Mr. Yates interposed quickly while he gazed in distress at her contorted features, "don't cry, I wouldn't cry! It won't do any good."

Then as this consolation failed in its effect, being in fact somewhat spoiled by his evident desire to escape, Yates walked to the window and looked out for a moment, drumming with his fingers on the panes and shaking his head. "I was afraid of this," he muttered to himself. "I ought to have looked into it long ago."

Meantime the poor lady's sobs continued to break the silence of the room.

Finally turning toward her as she gradually regained her composure, Mr. Yates said, "You see, Mrs. Arlingford, I can't exactly understand what is the trouble, or why you are so anxious about this matter. Now don't you think that the best thing to be done is for me to find out to-day exactly how affairs stand? Your brother-in-law, Major Arlingford, and I can go over it all quietly, and meantime you can be getting a little rest."

Mrs. Arlingford drew herself up with an air of intense eagerness as her brother-in-law's name was mentioned, and then said, calmly, but very impressively, "Mr. Yates, Paul, will you understand me when I tell you that I would rather lie by his side," and here she pointed to the room overhead, "dead, by my own hand, than that that excellent man, Major Arlingford, or his excellent wife, my sister-in-law, should know about this. Come," she continued, "I am perfectly calm now and I won't trouble you any more with my weakness. It is too bad of me, I know," she added, pathetically attempting to smile, "to keep you after you have been travelling all night —"

"Oh, I don't mind that," interrupted Yates.

"But," she continued, "you will forgive me I know. I must understand now, in case my fears are realized, and this money is lost in some unfortunate investment, what consequences will follow."

"Well," replied Yates after a few moments thought, "you see it is just this way. As for me, *I* did everything that *I* had to do. We decided at our last meeting on the investments. Everything has always been invested in his name and, of course, I could not be inquiring every day if matters were all right; I supposed of course they were. Now if Arling—that is, you know, if he has drawn it out and put it in something else, which, of course, he had no right to do without consulting me, we will find the papers for it, and if it was a *bona fide* investment and the money is lost, why it can't be helped, that's all. They can't blame me for it."

"And if no papers can be found?" said Mrs. Arlingford.

Mr. Yates looked at her for a moment and then said, "Mrs. Arlingford, I think you had much best be perfectly frank with me, and tell me all you know. It will have to come out sooner or later. If the money is not found and nothing to show for it, there

will be an inquiry, and as I can prove that it is not my fault, why,—” and Yates paused significantly.

The lady making no movement to reply, Mr. Yates continued in a persuasive voice, “You see, Mrs. Arlingford, I have lived long enough in this world to know something about men, especially in business, and I know that a man may be honest and honorable and all that, and yet sometimes make a slip. I have seen it over and over again.” Here he paused and looked at Mrs. Arlingford, but she had covered her eyes with her hand and gave no sign. “Everybody,” he continued, “on such occasions everybody always says it is so strange, but *I* don’t, I have seen too much of that in business. Now I happen to know that a certain gentleman, well, your husband, you know, has been speculating in Wall Street pretty freely of late, in some of those wild cat California mining stocks, and I *have* heard that he has lost a good deal of money in another sort of speculating here in Washington. In fact, that he has been playing pretty heavily. Of course,” he added hurriedly, as Mrs. Arlingford made a little appealing gesture, “of course, I don’t know how true it is, and I don’t believe everything I hear by a long way, but if this money is gone and nothing to show for it, it is a breach of trust, and,” concluded Yates, resuming his restless walk, “they will have to sue the estate, that’s all!”

“What did you say?” asked Mrs. Arlingford, looking up.

“They can’t expect me to stand it, you know,” responded Yates somewhat doggedly, “and they will have to sue.”

“Mr. Yates,” she exclaimed with quiet contempt, “do you suppose that this is a pitiful matter of dollars and cents with me! Do you suppose, sir, do you dare to suppose that to save a wretched forty thousand, or forty million of dollars, I would let you or any living soul dare breathe a word of reproach against one of the noblest men that ever lived!”

“Why,” said Yates, greeting this lofty exhibition of wrath with open-eyed wonder, “I don’t understand. Do you mean to say that he has not left you *anything*?”

“I mean, sir,” she replied, “that in his frank, unsuspecting generosity, he has thrown away his money on friends, friends who have deliberately ruined him! While I, I have nothing but my annuity, which I cannot sell, else, Mr. Yates, I should not now be holding this conversation with you!”

“Oh, well,” said Yates, “of course I did not mean to say

anything against him. You see I have done all that is required of me as a trustee."

"So you have said before, sir," she replied bitterly.

"Exactly," said Yates, innocently. "It is pretty hard on you, I acknowledge, in fact it is too bad," and he turned away, thoughtfully rubbing his chin with his hand. "How much is the account short?" he asked presently.

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Arlingford wearily. "Gertrude's fortune amounted to about forty thousand dollars, as you know, and from what he said, I am afraid that a great deal, if not all of it, is gone."

"What!" exclaimed Yates, again becoming excited. Then after a few moments' silence, he said, "And when is she of age?"

"She is just eighteen, but then there is the possibility of her marriage."

"Her *marriage!*" cried Yates, wheeling around, but this time, it was very evidently not the business view presented by this suggestion that caused his emotion. He met Mrs. Arlingford's surprised glance of inquiry awkwardly enough by saying, "Why, she is a child." And then added, "She is not engaged, is she?"

"No," replied Mrs. Arlingford, "she is not engaged, but a girl like Gertrude is liable to be as soon as she enters society."

"Then don't let her enter society!" said Yates, almost rudely.

Mrs. Arlingford looked at him for a moment, as he stood at the window with his back turned toward her, and the expression on her face gradually changed. Then arising, she went to him and placing her hand upon his shoulder met his eyes as he turned, and said, "Would you care if she were engaged?"

Yates' swarthy complexion darkened with a flush at the question, and then freeing himself he moved away, replying almost sullenly, "I don't know whether I should or not. I suppose I am a fool!" But immediately repenting of this harsh judgment of himself, he said, "You see, I have known her ever since she was a baby, and—and everybody says she is the most beautiful girl they ever saw."

"Then why not try to win her?" said Mrs. Arlingford slowly.

Mr. Yates laughed in a short, unpleasant way. "She wouldn't care for me," he said, "not but that I am as good as any other man, only I am not what you call a lady's man."

"Have you ever said anything to her?" asked Mrs. Arlingford.

"No, madam, certainly not," he replied emphatically.

"Paul," she said, "you are an honorable man. I know that you are a kind-hearted and a generous one. That you are wealthy," she added with a faint smile, "is another good quality as the world goes. Any mother would be glad to have you for a son-in-law, why should you not marry Gertrude?"

Yates' face again grew red and his eyes lighted up as he said, "If I could! But," he added, constrainedly, "there is no use talking about it. I don't think she would care for me."

"I cannot see why not," said Mrs. Arlingford. "I will help you. Do you understand? Wait a moment, hear me out," she interposed as Yates was about to speak. "I will help you, and all that I ask in return is your promise that you will give me time to repay the loss of this money, keeping the affair meantime entirely in your own hands so that no breath of scandal shall be upon my husband's name. You are rich," she pleaded, "you can do this!"

"But I don't want Miss Gertrude to be forced into marrying me," he said, suspiciously.

"Gertrude is not a girl that can be forced," replied Mrs. Arlingford quietly. "Nor would I force her, even if I could. All that I propose to do is to influence her for her own good in her choice of a husband. I love Gertrude dearly, and as God hears me, I speak the truth when I say that I would rather see her the wife of a man like yourself, than have her run the risk of being captivated by the meretricious accomplishments of the men she is likely to meet in Washington society. I tell you, Paul, any mother might be more than satisfied to give her daughter into your keeping, and what is more, I tell you that there is no reason why Gertrude should not be your wife."

"But—" commenced Yates uneasily.

"Great heavens, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlingford, losing patience, "why do you answer me with 'buts' and 'ifs!' If I were a man of your wealth I would risk forty times forty thousand dollars, or whatever the sum may be, for such a chance of winning the woman I loved, and such a woman! Of what are you afraid? At my death, and I pray God it may come soon, I can leave you the money. I have ninety thousand dollars, and although by the terms of my father's will, I can draw only the income during my life, the principal I can leave as I desire. And I pledge you my word, or if that is not enough, draw up all the guarantees and

bonds you like, and I will sign them, that the day of my death shall see you reimbursed."

"Oh, I don't care about all that so much," said Yates. "Of course if I should marry Miss Gertrude, it would make no difference about the money. But—"

"But what!" she interrupted. "Give me your promise that no breath of suspicion shall touch my dead husband's name! You see that I trust to your word alone! Will you promise? Quick! Will you promise?" It was her last effort.

"Well," said Yates, hesitatingly, "yes, I suppose so."

"On your word of honor as a gentleman?" Her face was burning now and her eyes shone with excitement.

"Yes," said Yates, accepting the dry, hot hand, she held out to him.

"May God bless you! Now go!"

Dropping into a chair, as white as the handkerchief she held pressed against her breast, she motioned him away, whispering "Go! go!" Presently the front door closed, and at the sound Mrs. Arlingford languidly opened her eyes. Then arising unsteadily and with her hand still pressed tightly against her breast, she made her way to the room where the body of her husband lay. Dismissing the attendants, she sank down by the bedside and bursting into tears, she sobbed, "My darling, my darling, no one in all the wide world shall ever say a word against you now!"

CHAPTER VI.

IT was not until a day in early June, some five or six months after the midwinter ball, that Carleton was once more aroused by the influx of many strangers. Then the graduating ceremonies of the senior class drew thither relatives, friends and acquaintances of the midshipmen from all parts of the country. Arthur's father, mother and sister were there. Gertrude, also, looking like a lily of the valley in mourning, had been induced by Kate to accompany them. Gertrude found those warm June days in the Marine College grounds very pleasant, too, wandering in the green, shady aisles under the grand old elms, or standing on the soft smooth lawns watching the midshipmen at the competitive drills, athletic sports and friendly contests of all sorts, which marked the close of the Academic year.

To Arthur the winning of his diploma was not altogether the joyful event that he had anticipated during the last four years of effort. In the first place he had to learn that gratified ambition is always a little disappointing. Then, too, he was not entirely satisfied with himself, principally, perhaps, because he fancied that Gertrude was not entirely satisfied with him. For on the first day of their renewed companionship, Arthur had discovered that Gertrude still possessed the same influence she had exerted over him in his boyhood. She was the embodiment of his conscience, of his spiritual honor; only the embodiment was no longer a child, but a woman. Nay, more with the chivalrous deference for the sex implanted in his youthful breast by his gallant father, Gertrude in her pure beauty and mysterious power, was idealistic, superhuman, divine. And each of his acts was accompanied by the old familiar question: "What will Gertrude think of it?" When he had parted from her six months ago in Washington, after his uncle's funeral, she had been almost like the child Gertrude as of old. During the week following that dreary episode they had been constantly together, walking in the early morning or in the evening twilight, saying little, she apparently

finding consolation in his companionship and he satisfied to think that this was so. Their future, with its new responsibilities, changed relations and possible complications, was all shut out for the time being by the curtain of death and they were remanded for these few days to their old terms of comradeship. When Arthur bade her good-by on his return to the Marine College, the tears, which at this period of Gertrude's life were very near the surface, filled her eyes as she said, "You have been very, very good to me!" And yet now, only six months later, his success or failure seemed equally indifferent to her, and while she talked and laughed with him when occasion served, he felt that somehow she was no longer the same. To be sure he had done nothing to be specially proud of. He had graduated very low in his class—he never had been much of a hand at studies. But on the other hand he had helped to win the shell race for his class against heavy odds. When an oar on his side of the boat had been sprung he had done all the work for ten lengths from the home stake. But while his classmates had cheered him, and carried him on their shoulders around the grounds in triumph, and his relatives and friends generally had made much of his exertions, Gertrude alone had remained indifferent, so much so that it had provoked the impulsive Kate to declare that Gertrude did not deserve to have such a "cousin" as Arthur. Gertrude had looked up at Kate, with her head on one side, and replied with a saucy note of interrogation, "No?" Whereupon Arthur had said impatiently, "Why, it was nothing, any fellow in the crew could and would have done as well, if not better!" But all the same Gertrude's apathy had hurt him. For was it not this same Gertrude who in his boyhood days incited him to acts of valor, applauded his feats of strength and agility, washed his face and mended his garments after his surreptitious tumbles from the major's horse or desperate battles with street arabs?

As he pondered over these things he wondered what could have produced this change in Gertrude's demeanor. Had he said or done anything to offend her? No, he could think of nothing. Then why was it? Suddenly there flashed into his mind, or his conscience, the recollection of a handsome, black-eyed woman, whose smiling face seemed to present itself as an answer to the problem. Had Gertrude heard of his attentions to this lady? Was that the answer?

At any rate Arthur accepted it. His face hardened a little as he

resolutely dismissed these melancholy, half tender, half regretful thoughts from his mind and forced himself to listen to the commonplace words of the orator, who, according to custom, was giving the graduates good advice on their future conduct in life, prior to the presentation of their diplomas. Then the band played "Out of the Wilderness," the battalion of cadets gave the departing midshipmen three cheers as they marched off parade, and Arthur soon after passed out of the massive gateway guarded by a marine sentry (who now presented arms to him), an officer of the United States Navy.

When Arthur accompanied his family home from Carleton, Washington City, with its magnificent distances, grown hazy in the heat, was deserted by "the social world." Fashionable people had sought their respective summer resorts, whether in the mountains, at the seaside or in the rear rooms of their closed dwellings. Senators and representatives had retired to their own states and the hotels and boarding houses were empty. Gertrude and her aunt departed immediately for Newport, where Mrs. Arlingford had rented the cottage of a friend who had gone to Europe. Major Arlingford had been in the habit of taking his wife and daughter to similar fashionable and expensive places and then making his own escape to more congenial surroundings. But this summer, somewhat to their surprise, he announced that he was the fortunate discoverer of a charming village on Long Island Sound, known to the initiated as Westasket, and to this place he invited his family to accompany him.

Catherine, his wife, received the proposition at first with a look of solicitude, and then agreed with her husband in every particular, even growing enthusiastic over the charms of Westasket, a place she had never heard of before. In fact this lady was in the habit of greeting any suggestion made by her lord with approval. If he had indicated a desire to spend the summer in the kitchen she would have discovered many excellent arguments for such a step and cheerfully submitted to the test.

So Arthur having preceded the family for a two or three days' sojourn in New York, joined them later on in Westasket. While in New York he met Dudley, who tried in vain to induce him to go to Newport for the regatta. Not succeeding in this, Master Curley had finally, with much grumbling, announced his intention of accompanying Arthur to Westasket, declaring that if Arthur chose to be disagreeable, he, Curley, would be disagreeable too.

At which proof of the boy's friendship Arthur was touched and pleased. Mrs. Dudley, who was a widow with this one child, was easily induced to change her plans for the summer; in fact she was only too well satisfied to spend the few remaining days in which she was to have her boy's society, at a quiet place like Westasket.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was a very pleasant party that was thus gathered together down by the drowsy sea, and the gentle summer days passed only too quickly in the idle routine of boating, bathing and fishing. Only too quickly, for Arthur and Dudley had been granted but one month's furlough prior to their departure on sea service, and the month was almost gone before they were aware of it. In fact the impending separation began to affect all of the little party, so that it was a relief when finally one morning the mail, which was distributed at the breakfast table, contained the dreaded document bearing the legend, "Navy Department, Official Business." The major turned the large envelope over, glanced at his wife and then handed it to his son with the remark, "There, young gentleman, there is a love letter for you."

Mrs. Arlingford grew pale and watched Arthur with a pitiful expression as he opened it. Kate exclaiming, "Oh, Papa!" arose and went to her brother's side, and with one arm around his neck, read the letter over his shoulder. And when Arthur looked up at her presently with an affectation of rebuke, she kissed him and returned to her seat.

"I am ordered to the 'Comet,'" said Arthur, handing the communication to his father.

"Where is the 'Comet,' Arthur?" asked Kate.

"At Charlestown, Kitten," replied her brother, "she is fitting out for the Mediterranean."

"Well, well," said the major, with a deprecatory glance at his wife, "I don't suppose you are expected to 'Comet' once."

"Oh, my, what a pun!" cried Kate.

"I could make a better one," said Arthur, "about being one of the ship's tars, but I won't. Would you like to read this *billet doux*, Mrs. Arlingford?"

Whereupon his mother smiled upon him through her tears and said, "Dear boy!"

"Come, come," then exclaimed the major, with assumed irritability, "are we to have no breakfast at all!"

And so the meal was bravely finished.

"Gertrude says she will be down here in a day or two," said Kate presently, holding in her hand a letter which Arthur's orders had crowded from her mind.

"Oh, I am so glad," said Mrs. Arlingford, "I thought they were going to the White Mountains this month."

"She says that Aunt Mary has had one of her attacks and that the doctor thinks the mountain air will be too trying for her. They are coming down with a party on the 'Petrel,' that is Mr. Yates' new yacht." Then glancing at her father who was reading a newspaper, Kate added, "She wants me to go back to Newport with her."

This information eliciting no response from the major, Kate looked appealingly at her mother, who, poor soul, ignored her own sorrow to give her daughter an encouraging nod.

This secret telegraphing was interrupted by Dudley, who, followed by his mother, came over to the table brandishing a letter similar to Arthur's.

"Did you get your orders?" he asked, after greetings had been exchanged.

"Yes," said Arthur, "to the 'Comet.'"

"That is where I go," said Dudley, "which is a fortunate thing for you."

"Why, Frank!" remonstrated his mother.

"Well, it is," said Curley calmly, "I have taken care of him long enough to know."

"I only wish you were like him, Frank," said his mother.

"Oh, come now, mother," replied Curley, "you know you think I am a great deal nicer than he is!"

And as it was evident to every one that Mrs. Dudley looked upon Frank as a paragon, the others laughed as they arose from the table, while the major, who was fond of the youngster, as indeed every one was, laid his hand upon his shoulder and said, "I hope you will keep an eye on Arthur, Master Frank."

Whereat the boy blushed, being as modest and diffident in the presence of his elders, as he was in the presence of women, while he looked at the major out of the corners of his big brown eyes to see whether that gentleman was "hazing" him or not.

"I am so glad that you have got Captain Topman for your

captain," said Mrs. Dudley to Arthur as the walked out on to the piazza.

"Now, why, mother?" said Curley, recovering his assurance.

"Because he is like a father to his officers," said Mrs. Dudley.

"Now how absurd that is, Mrs. Dudley!" said her son.

"Why, no it is not, Frank," said his mother.

"Why, yes it is, you dear thing; who ever heard of a captain being a father to his officers!"

"Mr. Blunt said he was," replied his mother plaintively.

"Mr. Blunt!" retorted Curley contemptuously, "and what does Mr. Blunt know about it!"

"And what do you know about it!" said Arthur, turning on Curley.

"Crushed again!" exclaimed that young gentleman in tragic tones.

"I have always heard Captain Topman spoken of as a fine officer and a thorough gentleman," continued Arthur, turning to Mrs. Dudley, "and I consider that Frank and I are very lucky in getting on his ship."

"Oh, pshaw, now!" retorted Curley comically.

"And the boat is a good one, is it not?" said Mrs. Dudley appealingly, to Arthur. "It is perfectly safe, is it not?" she added, wistfully laying her hand upon his arm.

"Indeed it is," said Arthur heartily. "It is said to be the best ship in the service."

"I am glad of that," said Mrs. Dudley, with a little tremor in her voice.

"See here, mother," said Dudley, in an altered tone and putting his arm around her waist, "there is no earthly use in your fretting about me. As Arley says, the ship is the best and safest in the service and if old Top isn't much of a father he is no end of a good seaman, and he isn't going to let anything happen to that ship as long as he is on it. So now let us go down to the beach and catch crabs."

"I wish all this was over with and we were out on blue water," thought Arthur to himself as he watched the two walking away, Mrs. Dudley evidently weeping, while Curley, who had always treated her more as a comrade than as a mother, was endeavoring in his boyish way to comfort her.

And turning away, Arthur went upstairs to find, as he had expected, his own mother indulging her grief, while the major was alternately arguing with and petting her in the effort to console her.

"Come in, Arthur," said the latter, "we were just speaking about you. Now then, let us talk the matter over sensibly. What day do you think that you had better leave this festive scene?"

"Well," said Arthur, "I have not thought much about it yet. I am ordered to report on or before the seventh, and this is the first. Perhaps I had better start the day after to-morrow, as I shall want to have a day or two in Boston to get my outfit and arrangements for the mess all ready."

"Oh, no, not so soon as that!" pleaded his mother, who had dried her tears to listen to this conversation.

"Wait, my dear," said the major gently, "let us hear what he thinks about it."

"I suppose I could make it a couple of days later," said Arthur, "only I thought it best to take plenty of time."

"Precisely," said the major, "I quite agree with you. It does not look well in a young officer to delay obeying an order to the last moment. And then besides there is not a particle of use in it, for a day more or less with us can make but little difference. Now, if I understand it, your ship will not be ready for sea for two or three weeks yet?"

"No," said Arthur, "I don't believe she will."

"Very well," said the major, nodding at him, "now I will tell you what we will do. As soon as you have reported, find out when your ship will leave and write and let us know. And then, if it is not too hot, we will come down to Charlestown and spend a week with you before you leave, just to keep you out of mischief and see you safely off. What do you say, Catharine?"

And that lady clinging to her husband's arm gratefully lifts her face to his.

"Well," said the major, kissing her, "so that is settled. And now," he added, nodding to Arthur, "I expect your sister is waiting for you to go boating."

Taking the hint Arthur left his mother to regain her composure, and calling Kate went down to the beach.

Arthur told his sister his plans as they walked along, and what their father had suggested. From this their talk drifted to Gertrude and her invitation to Kate to visit Newport.

"I do think it is so stupid to be poor," said Kate, looking very cross as she leaned over the side of the boat and let her hand dabble in the water.

"It is rather a bore," assented Arthur, glancing up at the pennant on the mast as he hauled in a little more of the sheet.

"I wonder if papa won't ever get any richer," resumed Kate, after a short silence.

"I am sure I don't know," said Arthur, rolling a cigarette and leaning back contentedly.

Kate sat up and drying her hands on her handkerchief, frowned as she looked at her brother. Arthur smiled placidly upon her in return, whereat Kate laughed and flirted some water upon him.

"But really, Arthur," she continued, "I don't know whether you know it or not, but ever since Uncle Henry's death we seem to be poorer than ever."

"No," said Arthur, "I did not know it. How does it happen? I have not heard of papa's losing any money."

"No," said Kate, "nor I. But mamma says we must economize, and when I asked her why, she said that she believed that papa had been losing money on some investment, she did not know, and that we must not talk about it. But that is the reason why we came to this stupid little place instead of going to Newport."

"Why," said Arthur, "I should think you would like it here better than at Newport."

"Well, I don't," said Kate. "But it is not only that. For the last few months I cannot go anywhere or do anything but that I am told that papa cannot afford this or that. It is such a miserable thing not to be able to do what you want without first stopping to count how much money it will cost. Now, I suppose we shall always have to come down to this or some other stupid place every summer, when all our friends are at Saratoga, or Newport, and pretend that we like it better, at least I do, when everybody knows it is because we can't afford to go anywhere else. I know it is mean to pretend that, and I hate myself for it, but when some of these women commence talking about their money and say, with such an insufferable air, 'You must find it *very* quiet at Westasket, do you *really* prefer it to Long Branch? Of course it is not nearly so *expensive!*' I just grit my teeth and say, 'yes, I do prefer it!' That is the way they talk," continued Kate, earnestly, as she observed her brother smile. "You don't know. It is different with you men. You don't seem to care anything about money. I wish I was a man!"

"What would you do if you were a man?" said Arthur.

"I would make some money," answered Kate, promptly,

"How?" said Arthur. "If you tell me I will divvy with you."

"Well," said Kate, nodding her head and laughing despite herself, "I know I could. There is that dear old mother of ours," she continued, earnestly, "she tries to give me everything I want, and fixes things and manages for me and never spends a cent on herself now. If papa gives her money to buy a new dress with, she turns one of her old ones and spends the money on me. And papa always finds her out and thinks it is mean of me to let her do it, I know he does. And I take everything she gives me, and then I am cross with her because I can't have all I want."

And Kate, gazing down into the water, surreptitiously brushed the tears from her eyes. Arthur meanwhile looked at his sister rather puzzled. Both his mother and Kate always appeared handsomely dressed and seemed to have all they desired, so that this sudden revelation by the latter as to ways and means rather perplexed him.

"I say, Kitten," he finally remarked, "if you ever want money you should come to me. I can nearly always let you have some if you only let me know in time."

"No, you dear old boy," said Kate, looking up with a little laugh, "don't you understand that I am extravagant? All the money in the world would not satisfy me! I want money, but I want four or five millions."

"I don't think I have that much with me," said Arthur, making a pretence of feeling in his vest pocket.

At which Kate laughed, and said, "Oh, I was only put out about something; don't let us talk about it any more. I wonder when Gertrude will be down; she said they were going to start at once." And then, after a pause, as she resumed her occupation of leaning over the side of the boat and letting her hand trail in the water, she continued, "Arthur, do you like Gertrude as much as you used to?"

"Why, certainly," he replied, in some surprise.

"She has changed a good deal," said Kate, "don't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly," said Arthur. "She has become a woman."

"And she has grown so lovely," continued Kate. "If I were a man I would fall in love with her."

"You would find that easier than making money," said Arthur, dryly.

"Why," said Kate, still looking over the side, "you have not fallen in love with her, have you?"

"Me!" exclaimed Arthur, "it would be very absurd for me to fall in love with any one."

"Why?" said Kate.

"Because," he replied, "I have not got money enough to take care of myself."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Kate with a royal contempt for the financial side of the question, somewhat inconsistent with her previous confession. And then suddenly sitting up, she cried, "Why, Arthur, how hard the wind is blowing!"

"Sit still," said her brother, as she betrayed an inclination to climb on to the weather side of the boat, "we are laying pretty close up, that's all. Hello!" he added, "there's a yacht off there. I wonder if that can be the 'Sea Gull' or 'Pelican,' or whatever Yates calls his old boat."

"It is not an old one," said Kate; "he has just bought it."

"I wonder what he bought it for," said Arthur. "He is the last man I should pick out for a yachtsman. When did Gertrude say they were going to start?"

"I don't remember," said Kate, "I think I have the letter here. Mercy! Arthur," she exclaimed as a wave broke against the side of the boat. "I *am* afraid!"

"There is nothing to be afraid of," said her brother; "I will let her go off a little."

"Please do," said Kate, "let her do anything she wants so that she won't tip us over. Here is the letter, dated the twenty-ninth and she says they will start the next morning, that is yesterday."

"Then I should not be at all surprised if that was her," said Arthur. "They have had a fair wind."

"Where?" exclaimed Kate, staring around.

"Just off here," said Arthur, "where I am pointing. Not there, goosey! Off here. Now do you see her? Shall we run down and meet them?"

"Yes," said Kate, "if it won't make the boat lean over."

Putting his helm up, Arthur ran down before the wind to meet the stranger who was evidently making for Westasket Cove.

"She is a pretty boat," he said as they neared each other. "It

is the 'Petrel' sure enough. He has got a good sailing master. There is Gertrude, aft, do you see her?"

Then there was a great waving of handkerchiefs and hats as the little schooner yacht came sweeping by in graceful speed, leaving them bobbing up and down in the short waves.

"Well, upon my word, if there isn't Duke Langdon aboard of her," said Arthur. "I wonder what has brought him down here?" and he looked reflectively at Kate.

"How should I know?" said that young lady drawing herself up with an affectation of dignity. Then with a little laugh and a blush as she caught Arthur's eye, she exclaimed, "You are a goosey, yourself!"

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING rather an unhappy disposition at the best of times, it was certainly a cruel fate which overtook Yates when he fell in love—and, too, with such a woman as Gertrude Alden! Young, beautiful, refined and intelligent, she was the centre of attraction for the best men in society. What chance had he? Loving her furiously, with all the warping force of his peculiar nature, he no doubt tortured himself in this pursuit in which Mrs. Arlingford had started him. For it was in just such circumstances that his deficiencies would most make themselves felt. He had not the first attribute of what is known as a “lady’s man,” as he himself had said. In fact, he was most impracticable in society. Young women did not care for his prattle about himself and his possessions, unless indeed he praised these wares in the matrimonial way. He did not dance, and in fact could offer them nothing in exchange for their society. Men like Langdon, with high-bred, easy self-possession, and a faculty of always doing and saying the right thing, were a constant irritation to Yates. What chance had he with Gertrude in the presence of such gallants? And yet he sought their presence, and by reason of his belligerent temper and reputed wealth maintained a sort of standing with them. Langdon’s society he especially affected. Whether he hated him or admired him most, was questionable. When with Langdon he invariably appealed to him by word or look for confirmation, or approval of his remarks. And when that imperturbable young gentleman would reply, as he sometimes did, with exasperating coolness, “Yes!” or “Do you think so?” Yates would eagerly modify his assertion until he had fitted it to such shape as would suit Langdon’s indifferent front. At such times he had an eager, wistful look in his eyes, such as may be seen in the eyes of an intelligent dog when he is at fault.

Mr. Yates had appeared at Newport shortly after Gertrude’s arrival. As he was rich, and as Mrs. Arlingford had taken him under her patronage, society generally adopted him. The secret

of his passion for Gertrude very quickly became known to every one at Newport, excepting, indeed, to Gertrude herself. Yates' composition contained no trace of policy. He openly haunted those places where Gertrude appeared, standing around, biting his nails, and with such an anxious, unhappy look upon his face as won him the derisive commiseration of his acquaintances. As has been said, Gertrude alone was ignorant of this homage. Mr. Yates was to her a middle-aged gentleman (although he was but thirty-four), one of her guardians or trustees, or something, and a great friend of her Aunt Mary's. Why should not Mr. Yates be frequently with them under such circumstances? She had known him ever since she was a little child, and if any would-be witty acquaintance hinted at the existence of any other sentiment than that of friendship in Mr. Yates' breast, Gertrude regarded it as a very stupid sort of pleasantry, and in very bad taste. And that was all. She soon became accustomed to his frequent informal visits to her aunt, and habituated to his presence. When she was with him she tried to entertain him; this was a duty she owed to her aunt's friend. But they had nothing in common, and if any of her own immediate acquaintances came at such times to claim her for a dance, a ride or a walk, she never had the slightest hesitation in excusing herself to Mr. Yates. She was completely ignorant of the effect such a line of conduct had upon him, although it may sometimes have occurred to her that he was a little odd or abrupt in his manner toward her. How should she know that every such disregard of his secret pretensions, that every little smile bestowed by her upon others, every word, every look of which he was deprived, was hungrily begrudged, and stirred up within his breast a nest of serpents, self-love, jealousy, hatred and despair, to prey upon his heart and drive him to solitary brooding until his passion again forced him to seek her society. As little did she guess that her innocent conduct was the cause of the pale, careworn appearance of her aunt's face, for the self-constituted confidante of Mr. Yates' love affair looked ill, there was no doubt of that. In the excitement and distress consequent upon the shocking revelation made to her by her husband on his death bed, in the urgent need to take instant and decisive action to conceal his dishonor, she had not counted the cost. Not that it would at the moment have deterred her. But now, after six months had elapsed, she began to realize what her bargain meant—that she had compacted with the devil by placing herself in a

weak man's power. The ardent lover had no thought of sparing her who had lured him on to this amorous pursuit. She, and she alone, was the recipient of his complaints when his mistress was indifferent. To her alone fell the task of consoling and encouraging him, of bearing up under the storm of despair that sometimes made Yates' mental heavens black as a stormy midnight; to her alone was it given to endure the voluble regrets and reproaches which he poured forth as he bemoaned the day he had allowed himself to contemplate the possibility of winning Gertrude's love. And, worst of all, perhaps, having quieted these temporary emotions and given him valuable counsel from her store of worldly knowledge and comprehension of a woman's heart, having outlined for him a course of action likely to win some slight regard from the object of his passion, and gain relief for him and her; to her was it given to know the bitterness of having a timorous, unstable, and yet headstrong fool for an ally, who, despite his promises, feared and failed miserably to carry her counsel into execution, feebly taking refuge in some little device of his own conceiving, such as adding one more to the long list of costly presents, which Gertrude almost invariably declined. No wonder that Mrs. Arlingford looked pale and careworn, given over to a degrading bondage to a man himself the bond-servant of his evil genius. Proud, intelligent and refined, she was the slave of a slave. Already she longed for liberty as the captive in a dungeon longs for light and air, for the man in his supreme egotism simply kept her on the rack by his complaints and reproaches, by his continual allusions to the husband, to guard whose honor she had become his servant. And each day, as she gained an insight of his character, the fact that she had bound herself to sacrifice all that she had left in the world to love, to sacrifice Gertrude to him as in their enforced intimacy she now knew him, bore upon her heart with an ever-increasing dread. A thousand times she declared to herself that she would not consummate their agreement—that she would withdraw from the compact and let Mr. Yates do his worst. But always her rebellion ended in her sinking on her knees and praying ostensibly to God, but, in fact, to the dead husband who had left her this heritage of woe, praying to him for forgiveness in that she had faltered in her task, and declaring with passionate vows that she would yet guard his sacred name from obloquy. With what sophistry she convinced herself that she was doing what was right in continuing her course, that she was justified in

marrying Gertrude to Mr. Yates, that he was in fact a most desirable husband for the girl, that she, Mrs. Arlingford, was only weak and nervous, and so calmly riveting anew her chains, heaven only knows! But the next morning she had a smile for Gertrude at the breakfast table, and a cordial greeting for that early morning visitor, Mr. Yates.

During their stay at Newport, Mrs. Arlingford and Gertrude had several times been guests aboard Mr. Yates' yacht; and when one day Yates proposed making up a party for a more extended cruise, and asked Gertrude where she would like to go, she suggested paying a visit to her relatives at Westasket. Yates did not follow up the suggestion with that cheerful alacrity which characterized his reception of most of Gertrude's wishes, but, as Mrs. Arlingford gave it her approval, the proposition took shape. On these seafaring occasions Mrs. Arlingford generally assumed the necessary social duties, advising Mr. Yates whom to invite and superintending the details of the cabin accommodations. In fact, Yates had about as little of the pleasure of being host as he had of being a yachtsman, for, not knowing one rope from another, either in society or aboard a boat, he was entirely in the hands of his sailing masters. Not that he was always complaisant, either. Occasionally, when matters did not progress to suit him, he would develop a determination to have his own way that bore down all opposition with a sullen disregard of appearances that was simply irresistible. Gertrude was generally the unwitting cause of these moods, and the devices which her aunt resorted to for keeping her in ignorance of the real reasons for the abrupt termination of some of their cruises, were marvels of ingenuity. Yates was always very penitent after such displays of his mastery, and prodigal in promises never to offend again if Mrs. Arlingford would overlook them, and once more be his guest aboard the "Petrel." So, Mrs. Arlingford, of course, overlooked them.

Gertrude had anticipated this excursion to Westasket with great pleasure. On their way down the sound she was delighted with the boat, revelled in the sunshine, and enchanted Mr. Yates by receiving his attentions with the utmost kindness. It was a merry party then that Kate and Arthur found congregated on the veranda of the hotel after they had landed.

"How on earth do you happen to be cruising in these waters?" said Arthur to Langdon, after the ladies had disappeared in charge of Kate and her mother.

"Old Yates asked me to come down," said Langdon, with his customary sententiousness, "and, as I thought it would be a good chance to see you fellows before you sailed, I came."

"Have you got your orders?" said Dudley.

"No," said Langdon, "I have resigned."

"Resigned!" exclaimed Arthur, "the deuce you have! May I ask what that was for?"

"Well, principally because my father was in need of a companion," said Langdon, "and he wanted me to fill the bill."

"Quite right!" said Dudley, approvingly; "always do what your father desires, and you will never regret it. You don't happen to know of any other fathers in need of a companion, do you?"

"No," said Langdon, rolling a cigarette.

"Because," continued Dudley, "I would like a situation like that. Wages no object, a home being desired, use of the parlor one evening in the week, and Sundays to myself. You know we are ordered to the 'Comet,' I suppose?"

"Yes," said Langdon, "I saw it in the papers. When do you start?"

"I start the day after to-morrow," said Dudley; "Arley has not made up his mind when he will leave."

"There is a lady at Newport who told me to tell you that she expects you to say good-by before you sail, Arley."

"Who is that?" said Arthur.

"Mrs. Merrin," replied Langdon, curling a thin ribbon of smoke around his black moustache. "She is having a fine time with a lot of young Englishmen at the Ocean House. Merrin comes up from New York Saturday and goes back Monday. As nice a fellow as ever lived. By the way, why don't you come with us on the yacht?"

"Well," said Arthur, with a short laugh, "I doubt if Yates will ask me; and I don't know that I should go if he did. We don't love each other."

"No," said Langdon. "He hasn't many friends. He will ask you, though; he is hospitable enough. I understood Miss Alden to say that your sister was going back with her. Is it settled?"

"I don't know," said Arthur; "I believe there was some talk of it."

That evening the same subject was broached by Gertrude, as she and Arthur stood together on the veranda after dinner.

"Uncle Tom says that Kate can go back with us on the yacht; did she tell you?" said Gertrude.

"No," said Arthur; "I am glad to hear it, though; she will enjoy it."

"Yes," said Gertrude, "I think she will. Can you not go with us, too? I know Kate is anxious to have you. Or, would you care to go?"

"I should like to go very much," said Arthur, "especially as it is the last chance I shall have of seeing you. Only—" he added, hesitating.

"Only what?" said Gertrude.

"Mr. Yates and I are not very intimate, and, as I presume he will have as many guests now as he can accommodate, I would not like to inconvenience him."

"Oh," said Gertrude, indifferently, "that will be all right. Aunt Mary will arrange it."

And the next morning Mr. Yates gave Arthur the necessary invitation. As Arthur had said there was little friendship between them, a mutual animosity dating back from the days when Arthur was a self-assertive boy and Yates a sensitive youth, the former making the latter's existence a burden to him on the occasions of his visits to Washington, had not been softened by the lapse of time. But, although Arthur was disinclined to accept Yates' hospitality, he was pleased and flattered at Gertrude's interesting herself in the matter, even though it was at Kate's instance, and he was moreover desirous of passing a few hours in her company before departing on a three years' cruise. So he finally decided to accept Yates' offer. Whether Yates had anticipated Arthur's declining his invitation, or whether having given it, he at once regretted it, deeming it probable that the trip back would not be as pleasant with Arthur as without him, it is certain he did not respond very cheerfully, and even suggested that perhaps their arrangements might not suit Arthur's convenience. Arthur was quite sure, however, that they would. Whereupon Yates took the first opportunity of mentioning the subject to Gertrude.

"I suppose you know," he said, "that I have asked your cousin Arthur to go back with us?"

"Have you?" said Gertrude. "That will be pleasant."

"Yes," assented Yates, smiling dubiously, "although I should not think he would care for yachting, going to sea so soon."

"I am sure I don't know," said Gertrude, indifferently. "Oh,

see what a pretty gull," she added, as one of those birds swooped by them like a fleck of foam.

"Yes," said Yates, "it is very pretty. Of course," he continued, "if we should be delayed going back it would not make any difference to him, would it?"

"To whom?" said Gertrude.

"To Arthur," replied Yates.

"Oh," said Gertrude. "I am sure I don't know. Why, what should delay us?"

"Well," replied Yates, "he has to join his ship on the seventh, and we might be becalmed, you know. And then I thought it would be nice to stop over a day or two at Seaside."

"Did you?" said Gertrude, "I had not heard of that."

"Well," said Yates, stooping to pick up a pebble and throwing it into the water to cover his embarrassment, "I thought it would be pleasant. I guess," he added, as though the thought had just occurred to him, "I guess I had better tell Arthur. It might make a difference to him."

Then Gertrude turned and glanced at him curiously. After a few moments' silence she said, "I am afraid, Mr. Yates, that you are being inconvenienced by having so many of us on the 'Petrel.' Aunt Catharine is very anxious to have me stay with her for a week or two, and, although I had not quite decided, I think perhaps it will be as well. Kate does not care very much about going to Newport—she would rather have me stay here with her."

Yates stopped short, and gazed at Gertrude with an anxious startled look; then, breaking forth with eager volubility, he said, "But you won't do that? Your aunt said that you would go back with me if we came; she told me so before we started. There is nothing to stay here for, and as for my being inconvenienced, you know there is plenty of room on the yacht, and then we can always put cots in the saloon for the gentlemen, and I will see to it that Ropes gets back in plenty of time for Arthur to join his ship; he has to do what I tell him, or I'll get another sailing master, that's all! Arthur can get to Newport as quick in the yacht as by rail. So why can't you all come back with me as you said you would? I asked Arthur to go just as soon as your aunt spoke of it, because she said that you would like it, and Miss Kate, too. You will go, won't you?" And Yates awaited her reply with an anxious, appealing look.

A month ago Gertrude would have laughed at this sudden

change of front brought about as it had been by a word, but now she felt vaguely displeased and dissatisfied with herself and her surroundings. She was annoyed that her aunt should have mentioned her name in connection with Arthur's invitation, and although at the time she had spoken she had little idea of not returning with Mr. Yates, now she was tempted to remain in good earnest. To his repeated and urgent importunities, however, she finally answered that if he was quite sure that he would not be inconvenienced, the arrangement should stand as it was. Secretly she regretted having had Arthur invited to accompany them, for clearly he was an unwelcome guest, and she resented the fact. At one moment she had it in mind to tell him to decline the invitation, but an instant's thought showed her how undesirable that course would be, whereupon she became irritated, and hardly spoke to Mr. Yates, and was scarcely more agreeable to Arthur, allowing Dudley to monopolize her time and attention, much to that young gentlemen's gratification.

Dudley took exception to Arthur's desertion of him, as he characterized this projected trip to Newport. Calling his attention to the fact that he, Dudley, had sacrificed his visit to Newport to spend the summer at Westasket, he demanded, with an assumption of aggressiveness, to be informed whether or not he was being treated squarely.

"I don't know," he said, "how you look at it, but it seems to me that I am getting left."

"I don't think you are," said Arthur. "Didn't you tell me that you would have to go home before joining, and so why shouldn't I go to Newport?"

"That is all very fine," grumbled Curley, "but it would not have made any difference even if I had not intended going home, you would have gone on that old tub anyway!"

"How do you know I would?" said Arthur.

"Well, you would, wouldn't you?" replied Dudley.

"No, I would not," said Arthur.

"Well, why didn't you say so?" retorted Dudley. "That was all I wanted to know!"

"You ninny!" exclaimed Arthur, laughing and jamming Curley's hat down over his eyes.

"I am an ass, that's a fact," said Curley, leaning his head back to look at Arthur from under the brim.

CHAPTER IX.

THE yacht "Petrel" was lying at anchor off Shell Beach, awaiting the turn of the tide. It was dusk and rapidly becoming dark, but, under promise of a full moon, the ladies were all on deck, seated in camp chairs or on piles of cushions, scattered about, while the gentlemen disposed in easy attitudes, had found the places that suited them best. There was a quiet witchery in the silently descending night, in the stillness unbroken except by the "lap-lap" of the water around the sides of the boat, or the distant splash and rattle of a cable, or voices, or the bark of a dog as some belated fishing schooner came to anchor to await the turning of the tide. The great vault above was empty, except for one lonely star standing like a sentinel over the banished sun. Presently another star slowly appeared in the east, and then another, and another, until, hurrying in from north, south, east and west, they soon crowded the dark blue dome, all twinkling and flashing, until the last tardy comer had hustled into place. Then suddenly there seemed to come a hush over the vast throng as a weird signal was flung out in the east, and presently their sovereign, the moon, uprose, slowly, majestically, all streaming with light.

"There is the moon!" said Yates, breaking the silence induced in the others by the scene.

"Oh!" said Gertrude, with an impatient sigh, "one would think he had made it rise."

"Some men are born showmen," said Langdon, who was seated near her.

"Arthur," continued Gertrude, "why are you so unsociable?"

Arthur was leaning on the rail, smoking his pipe, a little apart from the others. Perhaps Gertrude knew that she had not given him encouragement during the day to be otherwise than unsociable, but her irritation had subsided now, and she chose to ignore the fact. Arthur knocked the ashes from his pipe and sat down on a coil of rope near her, saying lightly, "I was burning

incense to the divinity of the night." Then adding, "Duke, sing us a song."

A request which was immediately seconded by the ladies on the other side of the deck.

"I can't sing," said Langdon, lazily. "I don't know anything but class songs. You sing."

"Come, don't be bashful," said Arthur. "Kate, where is your guitar?"

"Sing 'The Sailor's Wife,'" said Kate, handing him her guitar.

"But that is so doleful," said Langdon; "it is a regular heart-breaker."

"Sing it," said Kate, peremptorily; "it is just the sort of a night to have one's heart broken."

"Well, we will sing the first and third verses, as they do in church," said Langdon.

"No," said Kate, "we want it all."

"Every line?" said Langdon.

"Every line," said Kate.

Whereupon, touching a few minor chords on the guitar, Langdon sang in a good tenor voice, to a plaintive air, the following song:

THE SAILOR'S WIFE.

Again slow and measured the tread
Of his foot on the floor!

* * * * *

He yesterday said,
As the tears in my eyes
Brought his arms round my neck,
'Twas his old trick of 'planking the deck,'
Nothing more!
By a smile he thinks to beguile me,
But my love is too wise.

This enduring unhappiness
Shaped into sound,
Echoes dull in my heart
And awakes with a start
Angry love, hate and fear.
Hate! ah! how I hate thee, oh Sea.
For thus calling my love of a year
Back to thee!

Salt tears that are mine
Awake not such grace
As one drop of thy brine,
Careless, dashed in his face;
The calm swell of thy bosom
Would to him dearer be
Than the throbbing of mine—
Mine! 'Twas I drew him from thee!

He gave me his love,
But thou, by thine art,
Had transformed his heart
To a strange sea shell
Wherein thou dost dwell,
And, when still and alone,
He'll list to thy tone,
And yearn for thee
At thy murmur,
Oh Sea!

Take him then, it must be;
At thy weird wanton call
I know he will leave all in all,
Even me.
For his life is thy power,
Mine was for an hour,
He is thine, not mine,
Oh Sea!

I hate, yes hate thee, yet fear,
For, in thy fatal embrace,
I know full soon shall I hear
What I dread—
The wash of thy wave on his face,
On his face when he's dead,
Oh Sea!

While the customary thanks and compliments were being uttered at the conclusion of this melancholy ditty, Arthur observed that Gertrude shivered slightly, and, getting up, he wrapped a shawl around her shoulders. She looked up and thanked him with a smile, and moved her drapery to make room for him beside her.

"I don't like that song," she said. "I wish he had not sung it."

And Arthur remembering her fearful experience on the ocean

when she was a little child, and her loss, the impression of which had never left her, said comfortingly, "I would not think of it. What a glorious night it is; I suppose all of Newport is out driving in the moonlight!"

"Are you glad that you are going to sea?" said Gertrude, without seconding his attempt to divert her thoughts. "Is it a pleasant life?"

"Well, yes," he answered, "it is pleasant enough if you have a nice lot of fellows aboard."

"I suppose that makes a great difference," said Gertrude. "You must get very tired of each other on a long cruise. Then, too, I am beginning to think there are not very many nice people in the world."

"Well, there are not very many," said Arthur. "When you come to think of it, there are very few people one really cares for."

"Oh, I care about a great many," said Gertrude, "but that is through what Mr. Dudley would call force of circumstances. But I mean people that you meet every day. You so rarely find any one whom you care to talk to or even see a second time. Sometimes," she added, "you do meet a person who says something or looks something that goes deeper than usual, and it is so pleasant."

"A sort of an affinity?" suggested Arthur, secretly speculating as to who it was among Gertrude's acquaintances had said or looked "something" that went deeper than usual.

"I suppose so," said Gertrude, reflectively, without apparently considering the word. Then, looking up, she continued, "I know that sometimes when I have heard a great singer or a great actor, or have read some striking author, I have longed to meet the man himself. And it has always been in a very humble spirit, with a feeling that he could tell me something or do something for me that I very much wanted—something new and great. But they are always disappointing. They rarely ever even come up to the standard of clever people one meets in society."

"Perhaps a part of the trouble lies with you," said Arthur. "You know you always did have a faculty of creating an ideal out of a very little. I recollect how often I secretly rebelled, as a boy, because I felt that I was being weighed in your scales and found wanting, when I was really doing my best according to my lights."

"Did you?" said Gertrude, gently. "But you were very nice—as a *boy*."

"Thank you," said Arthur, laughing; "that is something. I remember," he continued, "my father telling us how, when he was out on the plains, he would often mistake a sand-hill crane near by for a horseman in the distance. I am afraid all your cavaliers will turn out sand-hill cranes, Gertrude."

"Do you really think so?" she said, seriously.

"I really do," replied Arthur, solemnly. "But then," he added, consolingly, "my father said sand-hill cranes were very good to eat when you could get nothing better."

"Well," said Gertrude, laughing, "as you say, 'that is something.'"

For a few minutes they sat silently looking at the reflection of the moonlight on the water, where it glistened and sparkled as though stars were being rained on it. The stillness of the warm summer night was undisturbed; the low tones of those conversing on the other side of the deck, and the lapping of the water, seeming a part of the silence.

"What are you thinking of?" said Arthur, presently.

"I was thinking about that song Mr. Langdon sang. Do you think you will like your profession? Are you glad you are going to sea?"

"On some accounts, yes," said Arthur.

"I don't think I should like to be a sailor," said Gertrude. "Sometimes when I was crossing the Atlantic I would positively hate the ocean, yes, 'hate and fear it,' especially on a night like this, leaning over the side and looking at the black water—it was so deep and so dark and so treacherous. I can understand how that woman felt in the song," she added, with a little nervous laugh at her own vehemence.

"You are not afraid, now, are you, Nixie?" said Arthur, comfortingly, using a pet name Gertrude had been known by as a little child.

"Oh, I don't mind it now," she said, "and I did not mind it then when it stormed. Once when we had a terrible gale everybody in the cabin was praying, but I crept on deck in my waterproof and let the spray go over me and the wind tear me to pieces till the captain found me and made me go down-stairs again. But often, when the water has been dark and still, and I would look down at it, I would get scared and go into my stateroom and

pray. I always felt so little and so helpless all alone out there, and was so glad that I had some one to pray to. I don't know what I should have done if it had not been for that." After a moment's silence, she added, "Do men ever pray?"

"Yes," said Arthur, "some do."

"Do you?" said Gertrude.

"No," he replied, hesitatingly, somewhat taken aback by the question. "I can't say that I do."

"Why not?" she said. "You used to when you were little."

"Well," said Arthur, "I lost my faith somewhat, in late years."

"What a pity!" said Gertrude. "Tell me how."

"If you really want to know," he answered, "I found that after I had been at the college a year or so, a good deal of what I had been taught to believe implicitly was contrary to what I was learning of the state of affairs in the universe generally. This sort of thing kept increasing until I found that my faith was going by the board. It was just as though the ground was giving away under my feet, and I acknowledge I was pretty badly scared at first. I took to reading everything I could find on the subject, but that did not help me at all. I did not dare to say anything about it to anyone, because I thought I had made an alarming discovery that no one had ever thought of before, and that would upset society generally and plunge the world into darkness and chaos." And Arthur smiled at the recollection. "Finally," he continued, "I made up my mind to tell my father all about it."

"And what did he say?" asked Gertrude, with great interest, as Arthur paused.

"Well," said Arthur, "it did not have the effect I expected. In fact, he did not seem very much surprised or very greatly struck with my discovery of the fallacy of religion. In fact, I could not get him to say much about it, one way or the other. He just told me that it was something every man had to work out for himself, or, as he expressed it, every one must 'dree his own weird.' He did not even let me know what he believed or disbelieved; if he had I would immediately have believed and disbelieved the same things. Perhaps he knew that. As it was, I went drifting along in a vague sort of way, but all the time I held on to the habit of saying my prayers. The truth was, I was afraid to stop. It was like letting slip my last cable. Then finally it occurred to me that it was not exactly honest to keep up the form, when my heart was not in it, just through fear. Whatever I was, I did not

propose to be a hypocrite. So one night when I knelt down I just stated the case to whatever God there might be and the reason, why I was going to stop, and that is the last prayer I ever said. Are you shocked?" he added, looking up in her face.

"No," said Gertrude, after a little silence. "I believe that God will think none the less of you for being honest. But then," she added hurriedly, "I am not capable of talking to you about it. I wish I was. Perhaps I ought to be shocked, and ought to try to make you think differently, but I can't. I believe in it myself. I have faith, notwithstanding that I often doubt, and sometimes think that I believe, because I am afraid not to believe. I should never dare to stop saying my prayers. I don't know what would become of me if I had no one to pray to. But always when I am troubled with doubts something comes to my relief, something above and beyond my reasoning and my understanding. I think it is the *mystery* of it all. If we could know and comprehend everything about the next life it would necessarily be commonplace and open to criticism, and perhaps full of disappointment, as this life is. Would it not? But as long as it is a mystery it is grand and full of promise. I don't know," said Gertrude, her face lit up with thoughtful animation as she sat with the moonlight full upon her, gazing over the water, "I don't know that I can explain what I mean."

"I understand," said Arthur, gently.

"Then again," said Gertrude, after a pause, "why do you suppose it is that some people are tried more than others? Why are we not all tried and tempted alike? Then there would be some justice in condemning those who fail. As it is now, some who are tempted very hard do something wrong, and all the others who have not been tempted at all can't find enough severe things to say of them. Poor Uncle Henry used to say that I had more sympathy for the unrighteous than for the righteous. And sometimes I wonder if it is because I shall be found wanting if I am tried. That thought always frightens me, and makes me feel like saying my prayers. How do you keep good if you have no religion?"

"Who, me?" said Arthur. "I am not good. That is," he added, with a laugh, "I don't mean that I am a 'bold, bad man,' or anything of that sort, only I don't think I am good; in fact, I know I am not."

"Don't say that," she said, reproachfully.

“At any rate,” replied Arthur, “religion never helped me in that way. So long as a man is a gentleman, that includes most of the Christian virtues. A gentleman won’t lie or steal or slander or take advantage of the weak and helpless; more than that, he will always be ready to fight for the right whenever he is called upon. The only difference that I can see between a Christian, a true Christian, I mean, and a true gentleman, like my father, for instance, is that the Christian lives a good life in the hope of a reward hereafter, while the unbelieving gentleman does what is right and noble because he is a gentleman, and there is an end of it as far as he personally is concerned.”

“I don’t like you to believe that,” said Gertrude.

“No?” said Arthur, “then we won’t talk of it any more.”

“It all sounds so hopeless,” she said. “I wish I could make you think differently.”

“I wish you could,” said Arthur. “You always were a dear little girl to me, and if anyone could help me to be good it would be you. You used to, you know, when I was little and said my prayers,” he added, looking up with a smile.

In the shadow of her wraps Gertrude slipped her hand in his, and in that instant, as their eyes met, Arthur’s heart was suddenly overflowed with a great desire to be pure and good.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER the arrival of the "Petrel" at Newport, the yachting party separated. Mrs. Arlingford, who, as has been said, was occupying the cottage of a friend who had gone to Europe, extended to Arthur an uncertain invitation to accept of such hospitality as she could offer, which invitation Arthur declined on the plea that, as he was going to leave on the early morning train, he would only inconvenience them. Promising his sister Kate to rejoin her speedily, he departed in search of a room, which he finally succeeded in obtaining at the Sea View House. Here, while in the midst of his toilet, he was joined by Langdon.

"Go ahead, don't mind me," said that gentleman, lighting a cigarette, as Arthur, with a couple of stiff brushes, performed vigorously on his short, thick, brown hair. "I just dropped in to tell you that they are going to have a hop at the Casino to-night. It is some sort of a club that I believe I am a member of. Do you think the ladies would care to go? Or will they be too tired?"

"I should think they would be glad of a little exercise," said Arthur. "It is pretty close quarters aboard that yacht. I am going over to my aunt's place after lunch, and I will be glad to have you pilot me, if you care to, then you can ask them yourself."

"All right," said Langdon, "I will do that. Although," he added, after a moment's reflection, "I should not wonder if Yates would be beforehand with us. He is a member of the club, and won't wait for ceremony. What a queer old Yates it is," continued Langdon, meditatively. "He bores me half to death, and yet I can't help sort of liking him."

"I did not know that you knew him," said Arthur, pausing in his toilet to light his pipe. "Where did you meet him?"

"Here," said Langdon. "He is a friend of Merrin's, the husband of our lady friend of that name. And, curiously enough, the first time I ever saw Yates he had got himself in a row about

that same lady. You know she has been here all summer, and has been carrying on several desperate flirtations."

Langdon paused and sent a ribbon of smoke curling from his lips with great nicety. He wanted to give Arthur an opportunity to ask a few questions. His intention was quite evident, and Arthur understood it perfectly, but he declined to avail himself of it, and betrayed no sign of interest whatever.

"It is strange," continued Langdon, presently, "how our women take such a fancy to foreigners or to any fellow who can rig himself up to look like one. One of Mrs. Merrin's favorites was a cad who was doing the English racket. And such an ass! He wore a bob-tail coat, and talked with a drawl, and jerked his arms and legs about, and all that sort of thing. The style of idiot that any American worth his salt, wants to kick. I don't exactly know how Yates got in a row with him. We had all been to a big dinner, and were sitting around on the porch at the Club House, and every one was feeling tolerably fresh and talking a good deal. And pretty soon I heard old Yates' voice threatening to lick somebody. Of course we all crowded around, and then I found that the other fellow was the little imitation Englishman. I was for clearing the gangway and letting Yates thrash him, on principle. The old man was pretty full—it only takes one glass to upset him. Did you ever see him when he gets a sheet or two in the wind? No? Well, he is not pretty at any time, but that night he looked ugly enough to scare the devil. What with the champagne and the row, his face was a sort of sallowness, and he was horribly cross-eyed in addition. He always gets cross-eyed when he has been drinking. But he meant business. He had taken his coat off, and was struggling with a couple of men who were holding him, and was bellowing all the time like an old bull. The little fellow was not on the fight, and was trying to explain matters, until finally his friends carried him off. As near as I could learn, he had been bragging about the women who were gone on him, and Mrs. Merrin's name got lugged in, and Yates resented it on Merrin's account. I'll say that much for Yates, queer as he is, he has got very tidy notions about standing up for a friend. By the way," continued Langdon, "you must let me introduce you to Merrin—you will like him. They are living here at the hotel."

"Thanks," said Arthur, "it is hardly worth while, as I am going to-morrow."

"You don't think you could wait over for a day?" said Langdon.

But Arthur shook his head. "Where would be the use?" he said.

"Well," said Langdon, arising and tossing the end of his cigarette out of the window, "I almost wish I was going to bunk in the steerage with you. You say you will go over to your aunt's after lunch? I'll meet you at one then; will that do?"

"Yes," said Arthur, "that will suit me."

"All right," said Langdon, nodding his head and taking his departure.

When the door closed, Arthur stood for a moment meditating, and then, with the air of one whose mind is made up, he rang the bell. When the servant appeared, he said, "Is Mrs. Merrin staying at the hotel?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man.

"Take her my card, will you, and bring me word here if she is in."

When the man left on his errand, Arthur stood for a moment again irresolute, and then, saying to himself, "I might as well call now, and be done with it," he proceeded with his toilet.

"Mrs. Merrin will see you, sir," said the servant on his return.

Arthur, having finished his toilet, bade the man show him to the apartment, and, knocking at the door, he entered. He found himself in a small sitting-room, essentially a woman's room. A matting on the floor, cool and yet rich in color, with fur rugs scattered here and there. Quaint chairs and tables, no two of the same design, and yet all designed for ease. Odds and ends of pretty things in brass and glass, ivory and ebony, occupied every available space, not in "well arranged disorder," but as though the owner had admired them, tired of them and thrown them aside or put them to commonplace uses. The walls were covered with pictures, a hat was hanging on the frame of one, while on another, a brilliant painting of an Almah, a colored shawl was thrown with a curious, realistic effect, as though it belonged to the dancing girl. There was an air of carelessness about the room which, had it not been for the costliness and beauty of its heterogeneous contents, would have been properly termed untidy. As it was, this abandonment blended with and increased the warmth of color and luxury which characterized it and made it what it was—a frame for its occupant. Mrs. Merrin was seated in a low chair by the

open window. She wore a morning dress of a tawny yellow, an indescribable shade, which, seen in a wardrobe, would have been denounced by nine out of ten women as hideous. On Mrs. Merrin, with her purple-black hair and eyes, and dark, rich complexion, this yellow robe, with its quantities of lace, was simply a part of her as the plumage is a part of the bird. She was engaged apparently upon some fancy work as Arthur entered, but dropped it to quiet a tiny toy terrier that barked at the intruder from the vantage of her lap—an uncanny little piece of overbred, nervous life, with dim eyes and shaking limbs, over which it had no control as it stood shivering and yapping. Having quieted her pet, Mrs. Merrin, without rising from her chair, greeted Arthur with a smile, and held out the hand nearest to him. Arthur came forward and took the extended hand, with a bow and a repetition of his commonplace salutation. But when he would have relinquished the clasp she detained him, and pursing up her lips and raising her eyebrows, like a pouting child she said in an injured voice, "Why, how formal we are! But then," she added, changing her tone, "I am glad to see you just the same. I knew you were here. Did you get my message?"

"Yes," said Arthur, "Mr. Langdon delivered it."

"It was very good of you to come," she said, looking up into his eyes.

"Not at all," he answered. "You know that I am at your service, always."

Mrs. Merrin dropped his hand and exclaimed, petulantly: "Oh, yes, I know. But if you look upon it as a duty, perhaps you had better have stayed away!" And then, taking up the dog, she continued, "If he is going to be disagreeable, he had much better have stayed away, hadn't he, Frou-Frou? But, perhaps," she added, looking up, "I need not flatter myself. You came here on the 'Petrel,' Mr. Yates' yacht, and of course *la belle cousine* was one of the party?"

"Why, of course," said Arthur, removing a bouquet from an ottoman and seating himself.

"Don't you know?" she retorted. "We call Mr. Yates her shadow. He is desperately in love with her."

"Nonsense!" said Arthur.

"Oh, well, you can call it nonsense, if you like," said Mrs. Merrin. "All the same her aunt is working mighty hard to get him to propose. He is awfully rich, you know."

"No," said Arthur, "I don't know, and, what is more, I don't care."

"Jealous?" said Mrs. Merrin.

"Jealous!" retorted Arthur, "why should I be jealous?"

"Heaven only knows," said Mrs. Merrin, maliciously, misunderstanding him, "only you don't look particularly pleased. However, I quite agree with you, I can't see anything in her to make any man jealous. So don't let us talk about her any more. You are looking splendidly. How tanned you are. I like it; it is becoming to you blond men. Didn't you find it very stupid down at that little village all summer? I should have thought you would have spent the summer here, or at Saratoga, or where you would have seen some one, me, for instance."

"I can't afford to spend my summers here or at Saratoga, even to see you," he replied, lightly, teasing the dog, which had jumped from its mistress' lap.

"I don't know that you missed a great deal," said Mrs. Merrin, "it has been very stupid here."

"Yes?" said Arthur, looking up, "you have not found it so from all accounts?"

"Why, what do you mean?" said Mrs. Merrin, quickly.

"Nothing," said Arthur carelessly.

"Yes, you do," said Mrs. Merrin, "and I want to know why you said that. You have heard something."

"I have not heard anything," replied Arthur, "that is, nothing more than that you have broken the hearts of several men this summer. That was to be expected."

"And what else?" she said looking at him suspiciously. And then, after thinking a moment, she continued, angrily, "I suppose Mr. Yates has been edifying you with Newport gossip. That man is a fool!"

"I shan't dispute that," said Arthur; "at the same time, Mr. Yates has not mentioned your name to me. After all, I only heard that you had been flirting with some Englishmen."

"I thought so," exclaimed Mrs. Merrin. "And did you believe it?"

"Naturally," replied Arthur, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

A shade passed over Mrs. Merrin's face, and, compressing her lips, she was silent for a moment. Then, looking up at him with a side glance, she said, sullenly, "You need not have said that,

and especially in that tone of voice. It was very unnecessary. *You*, of all men!"

Arthur looked up with surprise, and then, with an expression of annoyance, he said, quickly, "I beg your pardon, you misunderstand me. I see no harm in the gossip. Flirtations, so called, are indulged in by most persons at a watering-place, aren't they? It always seems to be my luck to say something to offend you."

"Then why do you do it?" she retorted.

"Because I am stupid, I suppose," he answered, and with a tired expression he arose and wandered around the room aimlessly, looking at the bric-à-brac.

There was a few minutes' silence, during which Mrs. Merrin followed him with her eyes. Then, suddenly resuming her usual manner, she said, "You are not stupid at all, and I won't be cross with you. Come here and sit down. I don't like you to walk about that way, it makes me nervous." And as he obeyed, she took his hat from him, and continued, "Now, tell me, because I can only give you a few minutes; you are going to the hop at the Casino to-night, of course?"

"I suppose so," said Arthur.

"Oh, but you must," she said gayly, "and I will save you as many dances as you want, although you really don't deserve it. But tell me, first, how long will you be here?"

"I am going to-morrow," he replied.

"To-morrow!" she exclaimed, "why, what for? I thought you were going to stay here a week, at least."

"I have received orders to join my ship, and I have to go," said Arthur.

"But I don't like that at all," she said, complainingly. "You know very well that a day or two would not matter if you wanted to stay."

"I have got to go to-morrow," said Arthur.

"Oh well, I don't know that it makes very much difference after all," said Mrs. Merrin. "I am going the day after to-morrow. But did I tell you? I have a secret. If you promise to be very glad, I will confide it to you."

"Very well," said Arthur, not particularly impressed, "I promise."

"Well," said Mrs. Merrin, with an air of great mystery, "I am going to Europe. Mr. Merrin has promised to take me next

spring, and then you can come and see me. Won't that be fine?"

And as Arthur assented with but a moderate amount of enthusiasm, she added, reproachfully, "I don't believe you are one half as glad as I am. Just think what a gay time we can have in Paris. I have never been in Paris, and I am just dying to go. You will come and see me there, won't you?"

"Of course," he replied.

"Remember now," she said, "that is a promise."

"That is, of course, if I can," he interposed, quickly.

"But if you can, then you will. You don't look at all as if you were glad," she again said, remonstratively.

"Naturally, I am delighted," said Arthur.

"Are you, really?" she asked. "I can't tell half the time when you are in earnest. You have grown so indifferent. You are not a bit like you used to be."

"I am growing old," replied Arthur, laughing.

"How absurd!" said Mrs. Merrin. "You are no older than I am."

In truth he was not as old. But Mrs. Merrin was one of those women who, instead of letting the years dominate her, dominated the years. With her, as with those engaged in more serious pursuits, knowledge was power, and with the knowledge gained from the years she turned upon and conquered them.

The period for luncheon had arrived before Mrs. Merrin, giving Arthur his hat, told him that he had already stayed too long and must certainly go, granting him permission, however, to call upon her again later in the day, if he liked. And Arthur went, with a sensation of relief at getting out into the fresh air, away from the faint suggestion of perfume. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to think, not of himself, but of this outrageous story he had heard of Gertrude and Yates. And with his hat drawn over his eyes and his hands thrust down into his coat pockets, he strode along the street, entirely forgetting his engagement with Langdon.

The idea, the idea of that man, that ill-bred, dull, awkward, hard-drinking fellow, presuming to have such a thought. It really seemed to Arthur so preposterous that at one time he was almost convinced that it was nothing more than Newport gossip, or a little bit of scandal of Mrs. Merrin's own manufacture. But instantly there came the recollection of a dozen trifling incidents which he had noticed at Westasket, and on the yacht, of no sig-

nificance at the time, but full of meaning now in the light of this report. Had not even Langdon said, scarcely an hour ago, that Yates would be before them with an invitation for Gertrude to attend the ball that night? And yet it was incredible that such a man as that dared to think of marrying the pure, beautiful Gertrude! By heaven, the mere thought was sacrilege! Something ought to be done. Something should be done to put an end to it. Whereupon, for the first time, he was confronted by the question, what business was it of his? Hitherto he had only remembered that, as a rough boy, romantic and frequently misunderstood, as most boys are, the pretty, sympathetic, high-spirited Gertrude, with her mysterious coming, had been to him a creature half divine, to whom he had paid unquestioning reverence and allegiance. And when he had met her again, a woman, innocence and beauty seemed to radiate from her and create within him a tender solicitude, a desire to guard and care for her, while her presence filled him with a sense of humility and unworthiness. This was all, and this, as the world goes, was not enough to warrant him in calling Yates out and shooting him. No, of course not. Nevertheless he would watch the fellow closely and if he saw anything in his actions to corroborate this infamous rumor, why, he would— What he would do was lost in the misty emotions which these thoughts had aroused within his breast.

That night at the dance, Mrs. Merrin had more reason than ever to complain of Arthur's abstraction. But when she several times followed his eyes and saw them rest upon Gertrude, with Yates always near, she smiled and said, "You see?" or "What did I tell you?" and all the time she kept him more or less at her side with an adroitness which he, with a reckless perversity, did not try to resist. He was at odds with the world and himself, and took a vicious pleasure in outraging his own feelings and defying public opinion. He did not realize, at the time, that his avoidance of Gertrude, in view of the fact that his sister was her guest, and that he himself owed his presence there partly to her kindness, was a flagrant breach of courtesy, if not an affront.

When the dancing, in which he had taken no part, was ended, Arthur walked silently home with Kate and Gertrude and bade them good-by at the door. Inconsistently enough he was angry with Gertrude for having received those attentions from Yates, which he had so noticeably failed to pay her. At the same time, he vaguely expected something more than a commonplace good-

by as she gave him her hand, something, some assurance, a word, a look, he scarcely knew what he did expect. The magnitude of this parting, considering their former friendship, made him forget his behavior during the evening, and seemed to justify the expectation of something more than a simple "good-by." And yet that was all he received.

"It will be a long time before we meet again," said Arthur. "Three or four years, perhaps."

"Yes," assented Gertrude, "it is a long time."

There followed a silence, during which she quietly withdrew her hand.

"I hope you will be happy," said Arthur, constrainedly.

"You are very kind," responded Gertrude, much as though he had offered to help her with a shawl or fan, "and I hope you will have a pleasant voyage, and so good-by. Katie," she added, "I will wait for you inside. I want to see if auntie is awake."

"I will not keep you, Kate," said Arthur. "It is not good-by with us, just yet."

Kate kissed him and wished him good-night very quietly, and stood watching him until he disappeared in the darkness. Then, going directly to her room, she sat down before the dressing table, and, with her chin on her hands and her dark eyes full of tears, she stared at her reflection in the mirror. Gertrude, coming in presently, seated herself in a low rocking-chair, and, regarding Kate for awhile, said finally, "Don't be unhappy, Katie, you will see him again in a day or two."

"It is not that," said Kate, straightening herself up indignantly, and angrily winking the tears from her lashes, "but I do think the way that some people behave is abominable."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Gertrude, opening her big, gray eyes with great surprise.

"The matter is the way that that woman flirted with Arthur to-night. It is not only disgusting, it is wicked! I am ashamed of Arthur. He ought to have known better, and I am glad that he has gone away."

"Did a woman flirt with Arthur?" inquired Gertrude gravely.

"Could you not see?" exclaimed Kate. "Then you are the only one."

"Don't be cross, Katie," said Gertrude. "Who was the dreadful person?"

"I don't know who she is," returned Kate, with fine scorn, "except that she has a husband, and his name is Merrin."

"Mrs. Merrin?" said Gertrude. "Did Arthur flirt with her? They say she is irresistible, and has broken more hearts than any one knows of. It must be quite exciting. I wonder if she would not give lessons."

"Gertrude!" exclaimed Kate, facing around on that golden-haired maiden who, sitting with her hands clasped behind her head, was regarding her reflectively.

"Well," said Gertrude, "you need not look so shocked. I think it is a very clever idea. 'Mrs. Merrin. Lessons in Flirting. Hours, from two to four. Extra charge for Subjects Furnished. Attendance at Residence—'"

"Oh, Gertrude, don't talk like that," remonstrated Kate. "It is not like you."

"Is it not?" said Gertrude. "How do you know what I am like?"

"Well, great goodness," said Kate, "I should think I ought to. I have known you long enough."

"Then I wish you would enlighten me," said Gertrude.

"How funny you are to-night," said Kate, looking at her curiously. Then presently she said, as she resumed her former attitude before the mirror. "You don't care very much for Arthur, do you, Gertrude?"

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed Gertrude, while the blood suffused her face, "it is you who are a funny girl! Of course I care for Arthur. Is he not my cousin, after a fashion, and have we not been brought up together? He has always been like a brother to me, and I care for him almost as much as though he really were my brother."

"Oh, well," said Kate, with a dissatisfied air, "of course, only I did not mean—that is, you did not seem to care very much when you wished him good-by to-night."

"Why," said Gertrude, calmly, "what did you want me to do? Fall on his neck and weep?"

"I did not *want* you to do anything," replied Kate, with dignity.

Gertrude arose, and, standing behind Kate, put her pretty bare arms around her neck. "Shall I tell you something?" she whispered, and as Kate made no reply, she continued, "You are a sleepy thing!"

"No, I am not," said Kate.

Whereupon Gertrude made a contradictory little *moue* at her in the mirror. Then Kate, relenting, laid her cheek against one of the bare arms, and said: "I did not mean to be cross. I was put out with the way that Arthur behaved."

"Well, let us go to bed," said Gertrude, leaning over and kissing her. "I am sorry I did not make auntie's maid wait up, only she is so stupid when she does, she is of no use. Won't you let me help you?"

But Kate declared that she did not need any assistance, and, finally bidding her good-night, Gertrude retired to her own room.

About half an hour afterward, as Kate, in her wrapper, sat in the depths of an easy chair, musing over the events of the evening, her conscience reproached her with having been unamiable to Gertrude. And as she dwelt upon the matter, she felt a great desire to go and have a penitential and confidential little chat with her before going to sleep. Taking the precaution to put a chair by the door to keep it open for a safe retreat, she crept into the dark hallway with a fluttering heart and made her way to Gertrude's room. The door was ajar and a light streamed through the crevice. Gertrude had evidently not gone to bed. But just as Kate was about to tap she thought she heard a sound from within, as of suppressed sobbing. On the impulse of the moment Kate was about to enter with little ceremony, but a second thought caused her to draw back, then, hesitating for a moment, she returned softly to her own room. She stood for a minute in the doorway, listening, and with her mind filled with vague conjectures. What possible cause was there for Gertrude to be crying? Surely nothing that she had said (this, with a little spasm of remorse). But no, she knew Gertrude too well to entertain that idea. Then what could it be? Perhaps, after all, she had been mistaken. And leaning from the doorway she called softly, in French, "Good-night, little one!" The response came immediately, in Gertrude's natural, bright tones, "Good-night, Katie."

And Kate, shutting her door, concluded that she must have been mistaken.

CHAPTER XI.

ARTHUR and Dudley had joined their ship at Charlestown in good season, while, pursuant to Arthur's letter of advice, the major, with his wife and Kate, had arrived about a week before the departure of the "Comet." In that week, to be sure, Arthur had little opportunity to see his family, for, during the last few days that a ship is in port, prior to a long voyage, all hands are in a fever of work. First, there is the executive officer, apparently ubiquitous, now seen standing on the half-deck thoughtfully pulling his moustache; anon he suddenly appears by the dim light of a lantern in the yeoman's room; then his voice is heard from the depths of the ship in converse with the captain of the hold, and before the voices seem to have ceased here he is on the spar deck summoning the boatswain and studying with knit brows the station bill. And then there is the navigator, who, when not seated at his table, himself an island in a sea of charts, is seen with mysterious instruments screwed to his eye, staring apparently at a fly on one of the knee timbers in his stateroom, or taking the bearings of a distant church steeple or passing the word for the assistant navigator, Midshipman Smith, who invariably appears with dishevelled hair, a pencil in his mouth, and perspiration trickling down his face. And then there is the master staring aloft till he must needs have a crick in his neck, and shouting unintelligible orders to a speck of a man on the royal yard. And the boatswain, roaring forth warnings, orders and objurgations, addressed apparently to no one in particular, shouting forth boisterous questions which are never answered, or himself answering "Aye, aye, sir!" with seemingly no reason whatever, while ever and anon he interrupts himself to clap his whistle to his mouth and bring forth piercing notes, with an encouraging chorus from his mates of "That's well! Belay!" From below ascend rumblings, creakings and groanings, the hissing of steam and the monotonous clank, clank, of chain, varied at intervals by a deafening rush of iron cable. And through all the bustle and turmoil,

ever and again is heard the peculiar, weird song of the navvies in the barges alongside, the "creak, creak," of the tackle, as coal is taken in, interrupted occasionally by the sharp trill of the whistle and the hoarse voice of a boatswain's mate, chanting, "*A-way*, second cutters, *A-way!*" taking one's thoughts back to the shore with the departing boat.

Arthur's duties, as has been said, were varied and multifarious, and his opportunities of seeing his family were but limited. However, as those duties consisted in part of taking boats to and from the ship to the shore, he did occasionally manage an interview, albeit a necessarily short and unsatisfactory one. So that, when finally their last day in port arrived, he appreciated Dudley's congratulations, for it certainly was uncomfortable to have to be making excuses in answer to his mother's gentle remonstrances each time that he contrived to see her, and it would be a relief to have this prolonged parting ended. The day preceding that appointed for the departure of the "*Comet*," invitations to visit the ship had been issued to the friends of the officers. Arthur, who had been sent in charge of a boat's crew to execute commissions at the Navy Yard, was directed to bring back some of the guests at one o'clock, till which hour he was permitted to remain ashore. The morning had been devoted by his mother and Kate to the packing of a patent sole-leather trunk, conveyed into Arthur's room at the hotel early in the day by the major.

"I happened to see it down town yesterday," said his father, "and it immediately struck me as being precisely what you wanted for a sea voyage."

And then, proceeding to explain to Arthur all the ingenious contrivances of this trunk, the major finally looked at him with such affection as caused Arthur involuntarily to extend his hand. And while his father clasped it with a fond pressure, Kate smiled upon them through her tears, and Mrs. Arlingford, with inflamed eyelids, sat upon the bed, with one of Arthur's neckties in her hand, and praised the trunk and papa's thoughtfulness in buying it. Then Kate had busied herself in surreptitiously stowing away in the secret recesses of the patent trunk such of her own dainty belongings as could by any possibility, according to her judgment, be of use to a sailor on a three years' cruise, such as hankerchief-boxes, perfume sachets, and the like. His mother absenting herself on similar predatory excursions to her own room, invariably returned only with red eyes, a brave smile on her lips, and the

necktie in her hand. Finally the valise was packed, and Arthur, closing and locking it, sat down upon it, and, with an assumption of gayety, asked Kate if she was ready to go to the party. But Mrs. Arlingford reappearing after a short absence with a roll of white tape necessitated the opening of the trunk again.

"For," said she, "it will be of use to you on the cruise, won't it, dear?"

And Arthur had assured her with many thanks for her thoughtfulness that it certainly would be, that tape was a very handy thing to have at sea.

And then the poor lady fairly broke down and sobbed upon her son's shoulder, and was finally led away by the major, while Arthur and Kate silently departed.

As most of the ladies in the boat that conveyed them to the ship had relatives or friends among the officers who were to leave on the morrow, it was rather a depressed party that swept up to the "Comet's" starboard gangway. Once aboard, however, no one was permitted to indulge in melancholy reflection. Music, furnished by amateurs from among the crew, the continual arrival of guests, the sunshine and the novelty of their surroundings, soon chased away gloomy thoughts from the minds of sweethearts and wives. And if exterior surroundings could enliven sorrowful hearts, surely the sight of the "Comet's" decks this summer morning ought to have had that power. The subdued yellow light of the sun sifted down through the canvas awnings, was diffused over the cleanest of white and the cleanest of black paint work, causing miniature suns to glisten in all directions from the highly polished brass work. The deck was holy-stoned down to the grains of the yellow spruce, showing the shining ebony seams of pitch like black lines ruled on parchment. While the curious nicety observable in everything, from the ties of the old quartermaster's shoes to the squared yards and furled sails of the ship, and the cheerful spotlessness and brightness existing everywhere was as inspiring as music. The daintiest kid glove might rest with impunity even on the great, grim, shining black guns—if the quarter-gunner would permit it. Added to all this, the glittering uniforms of the officers, the picturesque costumes of the crew, "all in white," and the touches of color furnished by the bright summer dresses of the ladies, who had bestowed themselves in every conceivable place, each one scorning such a commonplace thing

as a chair, and the effect was a charming picture, a picture in pastels.

It has always been a subject for much thought and study on the part of old gunners and boatswains why ladies prefer gun breechings, ports, signal chests, and the like, for seats, while comfortable chairs go a-begging. And the question remains unanswered to this day. It has, however, been practically demonstrated to these students of human nature that a port is just comfortably large enough for two, and that the gangway ladder, when well draped with flags, is, like its prototype, a broad flight of stairs, a favorite resort for young couples. On occasions like these, it is the especial privilege and delight of the boatswain and his mates to startle these retired couples, when eight swift strokes of the bell sound noon, by using the whole force of their lungs on their silver whistles as they pipe to dinner, and cause dismayed owners of delicate nerves to clap their kid-gloved little hands over their ears. Then, too, as the hour for departure draws nigh, and there is a general rendezvous on the quarter-deck, that shrewd old observer, the quartermaster, invariably detects the absence of a brass button from a midshipman's coat, and keeps his weather eye open till he discovers what maiden it is that has it slung to her chatelaine; but, bless your heart, he never tells.

Finally, when the last tardy couple has been unearthed and appears on deck, she, poor innocent, with a story of the marvels of the garboard strakes, the scuttle butt, or the fore topmast fid, the exploration of which has detained them, the embarkation begins, until finally the last boat ruthlessly carries off the remaining light and beauty from the decks. Eight bells are struck, the hands are "turned to," the awnings are furled, the running gear, which has looked like so many door mats "flemished down," is coiled clear for running, the gangways are despoiled of their drapery, and the ship, like the crew, is shifted into its working clothes.

All of Kate's animation deserted her as she walked back to the hotel with Arthur, and, although at first bravely responding to his attempts at cheerfulness, she finally relapsed into silence, and allowed the tears quietly to gather behind her veil. On their arrival at the hotel, Arthur, with the assistance of his father, gathered together his few remaining possessions, and packed them away in a small satchel, and then went to his mother's room to bid her good-by.

The major during the day, had found many other odds and ends which might be useful or pleasant on board ship, and among these, securely packed away in the satchel, was a small meerschauum pipe, as black as some twenty years of smoking could make a little pipe. This pipe had been the major's companion on many a hard campaign, and it was very dear to him. It was a regular veteran of a pipe, having in its long years of service received many a wound, of which it still bore the scars, in the shape of curious silver bands and patches. The major sighed as he regretfully closed the old stained case, and when Arthur, far out at sea, opened it with a great wave of love for the dear old father surging through his heart, he found a scrap of paper in the case, saying, "Be good to my old friend, and don't be ashamed to go to him for advice."

Finally Arthur reappears from his mother's room, and, kissing his sister good-bye, tells her to "go in and comfort mamma."

"Well," says his father, cheerily, "all ready?"

"All ready, sir," replies Arthur.

And the two walk down the street in the twilight arm in arm, the major insisting on carrying the satchel, while he talks of the ship, her officers, and the prospective cruise.

"I have no doubt but that you will enjoy it all very much," says the major, as they near the wharf. The Mediterranean is considered the best station, I believe."

"By all odds," says Arthur.

"And the three years will pass only too quickly, I expect, when you once get into harness," says the major.

"No time at all," replies Arthur, "when you once get fairly into it."

Then, in spite of them, a short silence ensues as they arrive at the wharf.

"I will send you a line every chance I get," said Arthur, stopping at the boat stairs.

"Do," says his father. "I need not tell you how anxious your mother will be about you, and we will all look forward to hearing from you."

"Good-by, sir," says Arthur.

"Good-by, my dear, dear boy!"

And the two, with tightly clasped hands, take one long, affectionate look into each other's eyes. And then, turning away, Arthur springs into the stern sheets of the cutter, and,

with a sense of relief, gives the order, sharply, "Shove off, for'ard!"

The major, standing motionless on the wharf, watching the boat speed out among the shadows of the great hulls, sees Arthur turn his head and wave his hand, and then the boat disappears over the water in the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER XII.

THE season has begun in Washington City, and the capital presents a scene of animation and gayety, in notable contrast to its appearance in midsummer. The vast stretches of broad avenues, that lay hot and empty under the July sun, are now crowded with vehicles of all kinds, from the dainty pony phaeton to the pretentious four-horse drag. Elegantly dressed women throng the fashionable stores on the sunny side of Pennsylvania Avenue, stylishly clad children, with their white-capped nurses, play in the circles and parks, and busy Government officials jostle each other on the steps and in the corridors of the buildings of State. At night, from the brilliantly-illuminated residences, voices and music and laughter float through the open windows, carriages rumble continuously over the smooth asphalt pavements, while the great, white Government edifices add the grandeur of still life to the rustle and roar of humanity and dignify existence in this most beautiful city. The tide of political, official and social life is at its flood. But with this our story concerns itself not at all.

While the vernal Mrs. Smyth may call without further ado upon Mrs. Secretary of State on that lady's reception day, and be received and entertained, and while Mrs. Secretary in due time will return the visit, that is,—her carriage, all properly appointed, except, perhaps in the matter of an occupant, will drive to Mrs. Smyth's door and her card be left by a liveried footman,—while, I say, all this may happen in the case of this very exalted person, in the case of the unofficial "old residents" it is another thing. With them the massive front door, which guards the portals to the large, quaint, old-fashioned house, built, perhaps, of imported bricks a hundred years or so ago, excludes all but chosen friends. The grinning face on the brass knocker, which still ornaments the oak, though rendered useless by the modern innovation of an electric bell, contemplates the floating population with sardonic immobility. The aged, gray-haired negro, in blue swallow-tail coat and brass buttons, a relic of former days, scans with grave

courtesy each bit of paste-board before he ushers the visitor into the drawing-room. Here there is no recently acquired bric-à-brac. On the contrary, there is a guilty consciousness about the modern grand piano as though it had feloniously made away with the spinet and buried it in the cellar, while an ebony cabinet or a spindle-legged table among the new-fashioned furniture carries the mind back by easy transition into the last century—into the last century, when the gentleman in the high-collared coat and ruffled shirt, whose picture is over the tall, carved mantel, or this one in blue with a stiff stock and a glimpse of fighting ships in the background, gentlemen whose names school-children of to-day repeat when reciting their lessons, used to play at whist or dance the minuet in this very room.

To be sure a good many of these old mansions have been torn down to make way for modern improvements, or have been turned into boarding-houses in these later days, for while the passing years bestow a patent of respectability, in most instances, the entail is poverty. In fact, our friend Major Arlingford was no exception to this rule. But while he had not the means to maintain the lavish hospitality for which the Arlingford mansion had been noted in those good old days when a diner-out was admirably referred to as a “two bottle man,” he was at least able to live in modest comfort and repay society for its attentions. And then, too, Madame Catherine had a knack of gathering together the most delightful people, young and old, and of playing the hostess in such a charming, unaffected way as rendered the mere fact of being her guest a pleasure in itself.

The Arlingfords were of that enviable class of whom people never thought to inquire “how great is their income?” but only “whom will they invite?” And now that two such attractions as Kate and Gertrude were added to the list, we may be sure that these same invitations were more eagerly sought than ever. In short, the social sensation of this particular season was the advent of Miss Alden and Miss Arlingford.

Now when a young woman has the temerity to cause a sensation she must expect to be subjected to that system of critical espionage which is provoked by every one who raises his or her head above the level of the crowd, and when, as in this instance, these were such pretty girls as Kate and Gertrude, associated, forming apparently an alliance which threatened to regrade the matrimonial market by producing a corner in all the best young

men of the army, navy, and marine corps, not to mention certain attachés of the various legations and eligible gentlemen generally, it may well be supposed that every mother of a marriageable daughter felt it to be not only interesting but her positive duty to concern herself about the most minute details of their daily life.

As for Gertrude, around whom, for various reasons, most of the interest centred, scarcely a month had elapsed before certain Newport gossip about her engagement to a wealthy New York gentleman was revived in Washington. When this bit of news became stale, reports of her being engaged to other gentlemen were circulated as assiduously. In fact, as the season progressed these rumors grew to be as multitudinous as the sparrows imported by the Park Commissioners. Nor is it surprising that as the months flew by and no authoritative announcement of an approaching wedding emanated from the region of Sixteenth Street, the good ladies who deemed it their duty to concern themselves about the affairs of Miss Alden, whispered among themselves that it was very sad that such a pretty young girl should be so frivolous.

Now it must be confessed that Gertrude was not as circum-spect during this her first season as the circumstances rendered advisable. She was emerging from an impressionable age, and during the past year a material change in her ways, if not in her thoughts and disposition was observable. As Arthur had said, her men on horseback were turning out to be sand-hill cranes with a disheartening frequency, and this new life, from which the bloom was being rubbed off, was bearing its first disappointment.

At the same time youth is not easily daunted, nor will it for any number of disillusionings cease its eager gaze into the future for that intangible something or somebody, that ideal which is hiding in the untried years. And so it was that certain men on being introduced to Miss Alden marvelled at the expression which would at times light up her face which seemed ordinarily so indifferent, so devoid of interest in passing events. It is a very fascinating experience for a man, that of seeing a pretty face grow bright, that of seeing the soul awake, as it were, under his words, or under his gaze. How should the conceited fellow know that a rose with an unusual fragrance would evoke this luminosity in Miss Alden's eyes as readily as the author of a successful book, or a horse with a perfect stride, as readily as the blue-

coated hero of an Indian fight? Those dark, gray orbs were all unconscious at the moment whether the object of their interested regard belonged to the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdom. Only it was rather hard on the man. And people, especially elderly ladies with daughters of their own, will misconstrue the motives of other people's daughters.

No one said that Kate flirted. Kate was too matter-of-fact and took life in too sensible and serious sort of way. Her earnest brows and dark, inquiring eyes gave little encouragement to any one who left the well-defined paths marked out by common sense. And therein lay Kate's strength of character. He who follows the road, while he may find it monotonous and devoid of adventure, will certainly never get lost.

Both Kate and Gertrude were serenely indifferent to the gossip that filled the air around them, but for very different reasons. The one went her way in placid consciousness that she was in the right path; the other was careless of the criticism of those who held no place in her affection. If however, Kate was indifferent to what society said of her, she was not by any means indifferent to what it said of Gertrude. The traditional lioness never sprang to the defence of her cubs more quickly than Kate took up arms in the defense of those whom she loved. Many were the battles royal which she fought in the support of her friend on this very charge of coquetry. Perhaps after the first flush of partisan indignation had subsided she would be inclined to do battle with Gertrude for giving cause for such reports, though that was of little use.

"What am I to do?" Gertrude would say. "Am I always to be thinking of how I look and what I say lest some one should fall in love with me?" And then, blushing furiously despite herself, she added crossly, "I must say I think it is very silly of you to pay any attention to such remarks. What if they do say I am a flirt? It doesn't make me one."

"Well, but," persisted Kate, with an uncomfortable recollection of the indifference, not to say lightness, with which Gertrude had listened to her denunciation of this very crime once before, "I think you ought to be more—"

"More what?" asked Gertrude.

"You ought to be more circumspect," replied Kate.

"You do?" retorted Gertrude. "You dear, old thing, you are circumspect enough for both of us."

And then there was a twining of arms about Kate's neck and various caresses, which generally brought Kate's arguments and lectures to a premature close.

Now, while Kate was frank and honest almost to aggressiveness, she was not entirely ingenuous in her defence of Gertrude against the charge of flirting, or in her appeal to her friend to be more circumspect. That is to say, she was influenced by other motives besides that of friendship. That other motive sprang from a hope that she had cherished until it had become one of the objects of her life, a hope that Gertrude would marry Arthur. Who so well adapted to be Gertrude's husband, as that young hero, her brother Arthur, intelligent, brave and handsome! Or who so well fitted to be Arthur's wife as Gertrude, beautiful, bright and affectionate! Why should they not marry, these two of whom she was so fond!

For the first six months after their first auspicious meeting at Carleton, fate seemed inclined to fulfil Kate's dream. But since that night at Newport, when Arthur had behaved so badly, fate had not been so kind. In her distress Kate had taxed Gertrude with not caring for her brother any more. And now this reproach seemed more than ever well founded, for Gertrude, the admired of Washington society, the centre of attraction for a hundred men, had apparently ceased to remember that there was such a person as Midshipman Arthur on the face of the globe. No wonder that Kate chafed and fretted when it was intimated that Gertrude cared for any other man's attention. No wonder she did battle with society in general. Was she not the champion of this absent knight, Arthur, the keeper of this pearl among women?

"I declare it is too bad!" she exclaimed, after a confidential talk with her mother on this subject, for, as has been said, Mrs. Arlingford was in this conspiracy. In fact, when her daughter first broached the subject she had confessed that this conjugal project had occupied her mind before Kate was out of short dresses. "I declare it is too bad!" said Kate. "If Arthur had only not gone into the navy, or if he could always be in Washington, like that Lieutenant Jones!"

"I wonder if Gertrude cares anything for him," said Mrs. Arlingford, her stereotyped remark.

Kate shook her head hopelessly, and said, "I don't know. Of course she likes Arthur. She always did like him, but then—"

And that "but then" blocked further speculation.

"People are so queer," continued Kate, impatiently. "I can't imagine why Gertrude does not send that Mr. Yates off about his business. She surely can have no intention of marrying *him*!"

"Of course not!" exclaimed her mother, as though such an idea was the height of absurdity.

And yet, notwithstanding these sturdy assertions, this was the very possibility these scheming women feared.

"What do you suppose it is that makes Aunt Mary seem to like him so much?" said Kate.

"I have no idea," said Mrs. Arlingford. "You know that he is trustee of Gertrude's fortune."

"That is no reason why she should want Gertrude to marry him," said Kate indignantly.

"We don't know that she does," replied Mrs. Arlingford.

"It looks very much like it," said Kate. "Perhaps it is because he is rich," she continued. "I think it is a sin for Aunt Mary to encourage the attentions of a man like that, just because he is rich."

"Kate, my dear!" exclaimed her mother, reprovingly, "you must not talk that way of your Aunt Mary. It is not proper."

"I can't help it," said Kate, impatiently, "I do. Though, after all," she continued, after the silence which naturally followed this rebuke, "after all, if money has anything to do with it, I don't see why Aunt Mary should have opposed her marrying that Englishman, Mr. Courtney. He has as much money as Mr. Yates, they say, and is young and very nice, and comes from a good family."

"Maybe Gertrude did not care for him," suggested Mrs. Arlingford.

"I don't know," said Kate, "but I thought she did. Though Gertrude is so funny that way; she is not like other girls. She never mentions the name of any gentleman who pays her attention, though I am sure she has had a half a dozen offers this winter."

"Well," said Mrs. Arlingford, with a gleam of hope, "perhaps she won't marry any one till Arthur comes back."

"Then why does she keep Mr. Yates dangling around her all the time?" said Kate, promptly extinguishing the gleam.

And Catherine, the mother of Arthur, sighed and helplessly shook her head.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE early winter months passed by, bringing with them no change in the existing state of affairs. Mr. Yates still continued to "dangle around" Gertrude, as Kate had expressed it, but whether on sufferance or as an accepted lover in a state of subjection, society could not determine. The Christmas holidays were approaching, and the gayety of the National Capital was at its climax. Receptions, opera, balls, theatre parties, Germans and other festivities crowded each other so that the long winter nights were not long enough to accommodate them, and yet, fast as they whirled by, there was never a one of these entertainments but was marked with Mr. Yates' now familiar figure, following in the train of Gertrude. In view of the fact that Mr. Yates had never danced a step in his life, that he had no talent for what is known as small talk, that he lacked that peculiar ability to lean languidly against a wall and look bored, that he was painfully conscious of his hands and feet, and felt himself to be and in fact was out of place, and consequently always in somebody else's way, treading on a satin train or blocking a passage; in view of all this, it will be conceded that it was a very strong motive indeed that drew him into the vortex of society during the Washington season. Painfully sensitive as he was, the power that forced him again and again into positions where that sensitiveness was unmercifully galled, must have been irresistible, as in truth it was. Night after night on his return to his rooms from these merry gatherings, he would pace the floor, biting his nails to the quick as he recalled the shrugs of the shoulder, the impatient requests to move aside, the slighting smiles, remarks partially overheard, all misconstrued, darkened and distorted by his imagination. Brooding over these, he would mutter to himself that, "By God, he was as much of a gentleman as any of them!" And that he, "would not stay in the cursed town another day!" And, starting impulsively to pack his trunk, as he had done a dozen times a week, he would feel the chain of love that bound him to the stake tighten until,

unable to burst his bonds, with a groan he would throw himself into a chair and bury his face in his hands.

Then with this thought of Gertrude would come a train of devils to torture him. Every word, every smile, every glance bestowed by her upon other men, for not one escaped his jealous eyes, was recalled with relentless fidelity; the men she had conversed with, the men whose arms she had taken during the promenade, the men whose arms had supported her in the waltz, while she, her dress touching him as it floated by, was unconscious of his presence. All these he recollected with torturing minuteness, and, as the scenes pictured themselves vividly before his aching eyes, too often, far too often! he would fill a glass with absinthe and drink it off to deaden the pain of this dark conflict in his soul until it became no unusual thing for the gray light of morning to find him with flabby face, on which the beaded moisture trickled down unheeded, blood-shot eyes and trembling hands clenched in his tangled hair, still muttering, but with no sense or reason left.

And yet the next night found Mr. Yates in early attendance upon its round of amusements. Drifting aimlessly in the crowd, with the chronic smile upon his lips, belied by his anxious gaze, he endeavored in a dozen little constrained ways to appear indifferent and at ease. He was grateful to any one who helped him in this, to any one who talked to him or stood near him and thus gave him a reason for being where he was, although, unfortunately, any kind-hearted person who showed him this attention was apt to regret it afterwards, for once encouraged, Mr. Yates was difficult to get rid of. His conversation, as has been said before, was not interesting, in fact he himself seemed to have had this fact driven home, for he had got in the habit lately of giving a little deprecatory laugh after each remark, as though to forestall criticism.

All this time he made no mention of his love to any one except his self-constituted confidante, the widowed Mrs. Arlingford. Having blown his smouldering fancy into a blaze, she had now to battle with the flames. In season and out of season, regardless of time or place, he relieved his overburdened brain with a recital of his woes, his fears, his jealous fancies and despair, while she listened and comforted and counselled him and silently bore with him.

The time had now come when she was afraid to do otherwise, afraid for him, for Gertrude, for herself, he had grown so gloomy

and morose. And when in despair she urged him to declare his love to Gertrude and settle the matter, he would invariably answer evasively, saying that he intended to some day, or would abruptly turn the subject. He dared not put his fate to the test. He dared not take the initiative; he only doggedly waited for Mrs. Arlingford to make good her promise and give him Gertrude for a wife.

That Gertrude herself during the past season must have become well aware of Mr. Yates' feeling toward her there was now no reason to doubt. She could not well help but know that he loved her, if in no other way than by his constantly seeking her presence. But it was not until the season was well advanced that she actually realized the situation. He had been so quiet, so humble in his attentions, if persistent, that the idea of his loving her had not come in the shape of a revelation, but had rather diffused itself through her daily life.

It was not until the Christmas holidays that a slight incident swept aside this curtain of mist and gave her a glimpse of the depth of the passion along the edge of which she was so indifferently treading, and caused her to view his devotion with a feeling very different from her former equanimity.

It was on a brilliant winter's morning about a week before Christmas that, on opening the street door, equipped for a walk, Gertrude found Mr. Yates standing on the steps, having evidently just rung the bell. He carried in his hand a huge bouquet of rare hot-house flowers, which he, somewhat disconcerted at Gertrude's sudden and unexpected appearance, hastily presented to her, at the same time detailing the circumstances accounting for his presence there at that early hour, in palliation of her possible disapproval.

"Won't you come in?" said Gertrude, pleasantly.

"Oh, no, thank you," replied Yates. "I had no intention of coming in," at the same time making no movement to depart. "I just wanted to leave the flowers."

"They are very sweet," said Gertrude, burying her face in them.

"They are nothing much," disclaimed Yates. "If I had been in New York I could have got you some camellias."

"But I don't care for camellias," said Gertrude. "I much prefer these violets. I was just going for a walk. Would you like to go?"

Would he like to go! Had she bidden him enter Paradise, he could not have looked more delighted.

When she re-entered the house to leave the flowers he expanded his broad chest and threw back his head and held himself very erect, and when presently she returned and they walked down the street together, he conducted himself with boyish exuberance.

There had been a light fall of snow during the night and the morning sun glistened upon the white pavement, while the crisp, fresh air brought the color to Gertrude's cheeks, and exhilarated her spirits almost as much as she had raised those of her companion. When she casually remarked that the country must look beautiful after the snow, he eagerly suggested that they drive out to the Soldiers' Home. But no, Gertrude preferred to walk, and finally she decided to go to the Capitol and see the view from the dome.

It is a long walk from Lafayette Square to the Capitol, and when Gertrude at last ascended the steps leading to the rotunda she was tired enough to abandon the projected ascent to the dome; but in that slight frame of her's there dwelt a spirit of quiet determination, of indomitable will, of whose existence few people were aware. Kate was conscious of it, and called it obstinacy. Obstinacy or firmness, it is pretty much the same thing, changing its name only with circumstances. And so Gertrude, notwithstanding that she was very tired, was obstinate, and persisted in going up into the dome. As a consequence, when they reached the landing occupied by the stall for the sale of photographs and souvenirs of the Capitol, Gertrude turned pale, and, sitting down, seemed for a moment as though she was about to faint.

Yates instantly became greatly excited, and was for hurrying off the old man in charge of the booth for assistance, water, wine, a doctor, heaven knows what he would not have collected on that airy perch, had not Gertrude recovered sufficiently to interfere.

"Absurd!" she said, angry at her own weakness, while the color returned to her face. "There is nothing the matter with me. I would like a glass of water if you have it, that is all."

And this being furnished, she thanked the man and turned to continue the ascent.

"But you are not going any farther?" protested Yates.

"Certainly," replied Gertrude, pausing with her foot on the first step and looking back at him. "I am going to see the view from the dome."

"Don't you think you had better rest awhile, Miss?" ventured

the old vender of photographs. "I would not try to go any further."

"No, no," Yates repeated eagerly, "I wouldn't!"

"Very well," said Gertrude, wilfully; "if you would not you can wait here. I will be back in a few minutes."

Of course Yates was at her side when she reached the balcony. Here the keen, cold air entirely restored her, and, gazing delightedly down at the dazzling panorama of the glittering snow-covered country spread out beneath her feet, she drew a long breath, and, turning to her companion, exclaimed—

"Was not this worth coming to see?"

But as she caught sight of his face she added hurriedly, "Why, what is the matter with you? What makes you so pale?"

"Am I pale?" said Yates, with embarrassment. "It is nothing."

"But there is something the matter with you," insisted Gertrude. "You are not well. I ought not to have made you come up."

"I am perfectly well," said Yates, slapping the balustrade uneasily with his hand and looking down.

Then, as she continued to look at him curiously, he added, with embarrassment, "I was afraid that something had happened to you; that you were sick, that it was something serious."

"I don't quite understand," said Gertrude, perplexedly.

Then Yates looking off into the distance said with the air of one who was at bay and forced to make the avowal. "I love you so that if anything had happened to you I—I would have thrown myself down from here!"

There was nothing dramatic in his manner of making this statement, on the contrary, his bearing was awkward and his appearance not at all heroic. He was very pale, but it was a livid pallor and not becoming, and there was a strange, furtive look in his deep set, averted eyes. But there was no doubting that he meant just what he said. At that moment he was quite as capable of stepping off the balustrade into eternity, for the sake of his love, as he was of descending by the stairs to the busy life below.

It was by this lightning flash of emotion that Gertrude saw for the first time the dark prospect of this man's passion. At first she was frightened and instinctively glanced around for companionship. But they were alone on this dizzy eminence and in her extremity she forced herself to appear composed. She could not

—she dared not answer him. But Yates made no demonstration further than to turn his gloomy eyes upon her in a way by no ways reassuring. After a few moments of strained silence, Gertrude turned away and diligently contemplated the scene beneath, making some trivial remark about its beauty, and even pointing out the Long Bridge and Arlington Heights. It was a woman's refuge from a threatening danger, a pathetic pretence that it was not there. Then as Mr. Yates continued silent, making no reply whatever to her words, Gertrude, with a little shiver declared it was growing cold and proposed that they descend. He offered no objection and followed her moodily.

The moment she set her little foot on the crowded pavement of Pennsylvania Avenue, she regained her self-control and continued talking on various unimportant topics, while Yates walked by her side in silence, harassed by fears of the result of this betrayal.

On their return home Kate was seen sitting at the window in walking costume, evidently waiting for Gertrude; and so Mr. Yates, after a moment's hesitation, declined Gertrude's studiously careless invitation to enter, and took his departure in silence.

"What have you done with Mr. Yates?" said Kate when Gertrude joined her.

"He has gone," said Gertrude.

"Oh!" said Kate, mockingly, "I am so sorry."

"I am not," replied Gertrude, sinking into a chair and weariedly pulling off her gloves.

"Where on earth have you been?" continued Kate, who was not in the best of humor. "What is the matter? You look pale."

"We went up to the Capitol to see the views," said Gertrude.

"And you are worn out, of course," said Kate. "I did not suppose that Mr. Yates cared for views. Did he tell you what a much finer view he had from his residence in New York?"

"What makes you so severe on Mr. Yates this morning?" said Gertrude, in a low voice.

"Oh, nothing," replied Kate, lightly, "only I wanted you to go shopping with me, and I thought that if I came around *very* early, I might manage to get here before Mr. Yates. But it seems that I was mistaken."

"I am sorry," said Gertrude. "Can't we go this afternoon?"

"Oh, it does not matter particularly," protested Kate, tapping the floor with her foot, "only I get so tired of Mr. Yates."

In conversation Gertrude sometimes had a pretty little way of

reflecting for a moment and then suddenly looking up and delivering her reply as though it had been maturely considered. In former discussions of Mr. Yates, for they had been frequent enough, she would probably have appeared lost in thought over Kate's assertion, and then raising her head with a smile, would have answered, "Poor Mr. Yates!" But now, after meditating longer than usual she said, "I don't know why you should dislike Mr. Yates so much, Kate."

"I don't dislike him," said Kate, indifferently. "I don't care one way or another about him, except as I say, that I get tired of having him always around."

"He is certainly a very honorable man and I believe he is a good man," continued Gertrude, argumentatively, as though summing up Mr. Yates' qualities to herself.

"Yes?" said Kate, with an intonation rather nettling.

"Yes," said Gertrude, "and he is generous, too. It was only yesterday that he gave a thousand dollars to the 'Little Sisters of the Poor.'"

"So he, himself, informed me," said Kate.

"Don't be sarcastic, Katie," said Gertrude. "Mr. Yates does not talk of these things boastfully," she continued more earnestly, as she proceeded on this hitherto untrodden path of defending Mr. Yates. "He mentions them innocently enough when they are *apropos*, more than from any other motive, I think. He has not that faculty of saying little things that most men in society have, and I don't know but that I like him the better for it. No one ever heard him talk scandal or make fun of any one or say unkind things of any one."

"Did I say that he ever talked scandal or made fun of any one?" said Kate, drawing herself up.

"No," said Gertrude, reflectively, "I was only thinking of those people at the Beltons the other night, who found so much to ridicule in Mr. Yates' conversation. They are the worst gossips in Washington. That Mr. Milliken, especially, who boasts of being a lady killer, thought it was funny to say that some one ought to give Mr. Yates lessons in the art of talking to a woman. He seems to have forgotten the lesson Mr. Yates gave him in the art of not talking about a woman, last summer, when he boasted of his success with that woman, that married lady, who was his friend, Mr. Yates' I mean, at least her husband was," continued Gertrude in some confusion.

For, carried away by her ardor, she had made a reference which she instantly regretted. This Mr. Milliken was in fact no less a personage than the spurious Englishman, who had spent the previous summer at Newport, and whom Mr. Yates in the after flush of a champagne dinner had attempted to thrash for insinuating that he, Milliken, was looked upon with favor by Mrs. Merrin. Kate knew perfectly well what Gertrude alluded to, for the affair had become common talk at the time in Newport society, and she instantly resented it. For with the recollection of Arthur's attention to the lady in question, Kate felt, even before Gertrude began to flounder in her speech, that he, Arthur, was being placed in the same category as the pitiable Milliken, his rival perhaps, while Mr. Yates on the other hand was exalted as the knightly exponent of honor. It was bad enough to have Gertrude declare herself so strongly in Mr. Yates' favor, without having her make such an insinuation against Arthur. And the blood mounted to Kate's cheeks and she was about to retort, when, changing her mind, she compressed her lips and turning away stood silently looking out of the window.

This far fetched sensitiveness was easily accounted for in Kate, because she was always super-sensitive in regard to her brother, for whom she cherished a loyal and abiding love. But curiously enough Gertrude had been even quicker in seeing the unfortunate application of her words. She made a little deprecatory movement with her hand, and then feeling the impossibility of explanations, she remained silent.

When the conversation was renewed some time after, it was in a desultory way with no further reference to Mr. Yates, and Kate soon departed on her shopping expedition alone.

Then Gertrude, weary, dispirited and altogether out of sorts, leaned her head upon her hand and tried to think about what she had said to Kate. But her thoughts, in spite of her, returned instead to that scene on the balcony of the cupola with Mr. Yates. As his words sounded in her ears and his pale face and strange looking eyes appeared vividly before her, an apprehension of evil took possession of her. Unlike the tremor of fear she had felt in his presence, this was a vague unreasoning apprehension which increased as she reviewed Mr. Yates' acts, words and association with herself in the light of his sudden flash of passion. Most alarming of all, she felt stirring in the bottom of her heart, a strange sort of interest in this man who had crept so stealthily

into her life and had so dramatically thrown off his disguise. She wondered whether he would visit her again that day and what he would say and how he would act, subjects which had never before occupied her mind. She felt that in some way she would see a change in him, unaware that the change was in herself, that after that odd, fierce avowal of love, she never could regard him with indifference. Had she not defended him that very morning, defended him and wounded her dearest friend, and more, uttered words disloyal to the absent sailor, her boy comrade of former days, in the ardor of her defence?

Thus, when these two met again, it was with a secret, though thorough, understanding that their relations were altered. Mr. Yates knew that he had disclosed his secret, and eagerly, hungrily, unreasonably, hunted for signs of encouragement in Gertrude's every word and look. On the other hand, Gertrude, alarmed and uncertain, shrank back into the past, into her early youth, as a refuge; this both mentally and outwardly, for she put on and wore a locket that Arthur had given her many years ago, while her manner to Mr. Yates changed from its unsuspecting freedom and tone of equality to the respectful reserve which had characterized it in her earlier years. A change which, by contrast, seemed, no doubt, cold, constrained and repellant.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I TELL you," said Mr. Yates, striding up and down in Mrs. Arlingford's parlor, "I tell you she cares no more for me than for—for—for the ground, by Jove, that she steps on!"

About a week had passed since his memorable walk with Gertrude. It was late in the night, and the large parlors were brilliantly lighted and decorated, while on the carpet bits of lace and crushed flowers told of departed guests.

Mrs. Arlingford, still in deep black, was sitting on a sofa, leaning her head upon her hand and looking pale and tired, while Yates, in the conventional evening costume, strode uneasily back and forth in front of her.

"You know," he continued, pausing in his restless walk, "you know as well as I do that Gertrude does not care a bit more for me to-day than she did a year ago!"

And, nervously biting his nails, he looked with anxious eyes for a denial of this assertion.

"I have done my best," said Mrs. Arlingford, wearily.

But this was not what Yates wanted; this was not what he had outstayed all the other guests for; this afforded no relief to the fever of evil passions aroused by the trials of the past evening, trials more exasperating than any he had yet undergone.

It was the evening of New Year's Day, or rather it had been, and the old-fashioned custom of visiting had prevailed throughout the previous hours with that freedom and animation which formerly characterized the anniversary in Washington.

A few days before, Mrs. Arlingford had told Gertrude that she would no longer seclude herself from society, now that her period of mourning was drawing to a close, and suggested that she invite Kate and other of her young friends to receive with her.

This had been sufficient, when the holiday arrived, to crowd the house from morning until late in the night. It was the first time that Gertrude had received society in her own home, and it so happened that she achieved one of those successes which come

when least expected. Throughout the evening, when most of the visitors remained, she had been the centre of all eyes, the topic of all tongues, the magnet attracting general attention and admiration. Old hacks who had trotted in the social tread-mill of Washington for forty years were moved to recall the dead and gone triumphs of former days, when the beautiful Mrs. This, or the lovely Miss That, had taken the town by storm. And as they wagged their gray polls over these musty reminiscences they conceded that this young woman, this Miss Gertrude Alden, was only one degree less charming, lacked but a point or two of being as witty, as graceful, as pretty or as fascinating as their respective by-gone favorites.

At the same time the younger men stoutly maintained that there never had been, and never would be again, so charming a creature in Washington or out of it. And meanwhile old and young alike strove for honors at the debutante's hand, schemed for a glance, and struggled for a word.

It was a fever, a contagious fever, and every one caught it. It almost seemed as though Gertrude herself had infected them, so vivid was the color in her cheeks, so brilliantly did her eyes flash, so instantaneously did she respond to any and every word. Kate watched her with surprise, and grew uneasy, and yet was carried away with the rest.

And throughout this memorable evening Mr. Yates stood at a distance, a forced spectator of the devotion of other men, men famous in all ranks of life, while he, obscure, inconsequent, hating himself and them, was crowded into remote corners and doorways. Leaving his post of observation only at short intervals to hurriedly gulp down a glass of champagne, sherry, claret, he did not know what he drank. In the supper-room, he had stood in the crush unnoticed throughout the night, a prey to jealousy and despair. And now, having outstayed the rest of the guests, when he demanded encouragement, assurance, hope, demanded them as his right, as a starving man demands bread, Mrs. Arlingford had cast him a stone.

"I have done my best," she had said, intimating that there was no hope, that the failure was due to him, to the lack of those qualities the want of which he so keenly felt. "I have done my best," she added, wearily. "I can do no more."

Then the repression of the night gave way, Yates' self-control escaped him, and, raising his voice, he retorted furiously, "What

if you have done your best : What good does that do me ! Why did you tell me that you would make her marry me if you could not ? You told me that, yes, you did ! You told me that if I would put up the money that your husband took, I should have her for my wife ! And now that you have got the money out of me, you want to back out. But, damn me ! you have got to—to—to—,” he faltered and stopped.

Furious with wine and passion as he was, he was forced to stop by the sudden alteration in Mrs. Arlingford's face as she gazed upon him.

“ Well,” she said, very pale, “ go on.”

“ Haven't I done everything that you asked me ? ” he said, in an unexpected revulsion of weakness, while the tears came into his eyes, “ and you said that before the year was out I should marry her, and it is a year since—since you told me.”

“ Yes,” she replied, “ it is just a year.”

“ Yes, it is just a year, and I am no nearer to marrying her now than I was then,” said Yates, his features working convulsively.

In sudden desperation Mrs. Arlingford advanced close to him, exclaiming, “ Paul Yates, has it been my fault ? Did I not tell tell you that I would do all in my power to make Gertrude your wife, and have I not ? But you, what have you done to help me ? ”

“ Well, in the name of heaven,” exclaimed Yates, excitedly turning upon her, “ what am I to do ? Haven't I spent money as if it were dirt, just to please her ? Didn't I get a yacht, just to take her out ? Don't I keep the best team in town just for the chance of driving her out once in a month ? Haven't I let my business go to the dogs, just to be near her ? Look at all the presents I have given her ! Look at the bracelet I gave her Christmas ; it cost me seven hundred and fifty dollars, and the jeweler said it was well worth eight ! ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Arlingford, “ and she returned it to you. She would not accept any of your presents but for me. Why ? Why, because you talk to her about them as though their cost laid her under an obligation to you. No wonder she returns them or throws them aside. Can you not understand that the cost of gifts is nothing to her, that she would value any trifle given her in friendship or affection more than all the money in the world ? ”

“ Yes ! ” cried Yates, suddenly flying into a passion again. “ Like that locket she wore yesterday ! Do you know who gave her that ? ”

"No," said Mrs. Arlingford.

"Well, I do!" said Yates, moving his head from side to side and with a contraction of his throat as though he was swallowing with difficulty. "I do! It was that midshipman, that Arthur Arlingford! I believe now that she cares more for his little finger than she does for all of me. I told you not to make me ask him to go to Newport with us last summer. Didn't they sit together all that evening on the yacht? And I saw her give him her hand. Nobody else saw it, but I did!"

And Yates resumed his agitated walk, moving a chair or fidgeting with the ornaments on the table with a trembling hand as he strode around the room.

"If she knew as much about him as I do," he continued, "she would have mighty little to do with him, and I told her so."

"You told her so!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlingford. "And when, pray, did you commit such a folly?"

"Folly or not," said Yates, "I told her. I told her the very next morning when we got to Newport. Of course I did not tell her everything, I just told her that people were talking about him."

"You did?" said Mrs. Arlingford. "That was a wise thing to do!"

"I don't care," replied Yates roughly.

He was standing by the mantel-piece now, with his head on his arms, looking down into the dying embers of the fire, and after his reply there followed a silence in the room, during which the lighted jets sang shrilly as the gas was turned off about the town.

The air was growing cold, and Mrs. Arlingford finally arose and, wrapping her shawl tightly around her shoulders, said, "This discussion is of no use. It is getting very late. We are both tired out. Come and see me to-morrow, and we will talk this over."

But Yates did not stir from his position.

"Mr. Yates," she said, putting her hand upon his arm, "it is getting very late."

Then he raised his head and looked at her strangely. His eyes were bloodshot and his face gaunt and pale, and she shrank from the gaze he fixed upon her; she began to feel afraid of him in the silence and loneliness of the night.

Deliberately, but with intense emotion, he said: "I wish to God I had never seen you! I would never have thought of marrying Gertrude but for you. If I had to go through again what I have gone through this last year, do you know what I would do? I would blow my brains out! And I am damnably tempted to do it anyway!"

And with that he turned and walked out of the room, shutting the street door heavily.

Mrs. Arlingford stood like one who had received an unexpected blow; what little blood there was in her face forsook it entirely, and she stretched forth her hand in impotent protest against the threat. He looked so capable of carrying it out.

This was the first time he had ever turned upon her so and with a new born dread stirring in her heart, a dread of the harvest that was ripening from the seed she had sown, she pressed her cold hands against her head, and murmured, "What have I done!"

At last, worn out and nervous, she crept upstairs to her room, and dismissing the sleepy maid, sank into a chair by the fire. As her thoughts drifted back through the last year she wondered how she had lived through it. She was tired of struggling against fate; she longed for peace and rest with a great longing, but troubles only gathered darker and more menacing. Since her husband's death, much of the love she had lavished on him had unwittingly centred on Gertrude. Naturally this warm, living presence, young and beautiful, could not help but render the memory of the dead cold and vague. She was frequently surprised at the strength of her feeling for Gertrude, at the depth of the pride and pleasure she took in the girl's success. And with that proud affection had been growing an aversion for Mr. Yates that was beginning to make the idea of Gertrude marrying him, abhorrent. This fact added to her tribulations the reproach no longer to be denied, that she had not kept her bargain with Mr. Yates. She had not done all in her power to aid his suit. On the contrary, her sentiment had recently so clogged her power of action that it required her utmost vigilance not to work against his interests. This was to her no empty reproach. She had bolstered up her husband's limp sense of honor during his life and maintained it after his death, until the high standard she had upheld became her own. It was hard to live up to it now and yet her conscience troubled her when she fell short of it much as though she had been born with this ac-

quired sense. And Mr. Yates had that very night taxed her openly with falseness, with the meanness of having used his money to screen her husband's name without rendering any return. Nor was this all; to add to her distraction her very desire to escape from the compact which would sacrifice Gertrude, seemed like disloyalty to the love of her dead husband. That love had been the soul of her life. It had come to her when as a woman she had ceased to expect it. It was the only man's love she had ever had. She had fed it with her heart's blood, she had blinded herself to every deficiency, every weakness, every vice of the young husband, and had devoted all her energies to blinding the world. She had robbed herself morally and mentally to build up his moral and mental deficiencies. She would have used herself up, body and soul, in the constant repair of this poor, clay image, had not Death interfered. And now, when the cooling hand of Time had abated her fever and put her work in a proper prospective she did not dare to acknowledge to herself that her life's labor had been misplaced. Her last effort had been made to shield his name from the shame which attached to the breach of trust of which he had confessed himself guilty on his death bed. She had begun the work with all her might, but as the months passed by, her spirit flagged, her hand grew unnerved, and she would fain have abandoned the task. But she dared not, she dared not break her word to Mr. Yates, or break her troth with her dead husband. If she only might go away from all these old entanglements and associations, go and pass the remnant of her life quietly and peacefully in the sunlight of Gertrude's young, unselfish love—but no, that could not be.

And yet, after all, what reason had she to suppose that Gertrude, even under pressure of her wish, would ever marry Mr. Yates? What if she should tell her that Mr. Yates loved her, wished her to be his wife; what if she should set the case before her as fairly for Mr. Yates' chances as she could, was there the slightest reason for supposing that Gertrude would accept him? Had not her growing dread for such a result magnified its probability? And forced now by Mr. Yates' desperation, to grapple with the danger, Mrs. Arlingford went to the other extreme and belittled it until it almost disappeared. She wondered that she had not looked at the matter in this light before. Of course Gertrude would not accept him; there was absolutely nothing to induce her to do so excepting, of course, obedience to her, Mrs.

Arlingford's wish, and that obedience would scarcely be strained to such an extent. Mrs. Arlingford felt so relieved at this line of reasoning that she even began to smile at her former fears, and to dispel any lingering doubt fell to pitying Mr. Yates. Poor fellow, she felt quite sorry for him. This comparison, however, recalled Mr. Yates' abrupt departure a few hours before, and as she remembered his reckless demeanor her new-born complacency sickened. What would he do? Announce to the world her husband's dishonor, and her wretched device to conceal it! Or do himself, or her, maybe,—some bodily injury! Perhaps it would be as well to write him a little note, telling him of her intention to speak to Gertrude, and urging him to be patient. And Mrs. Arlingford, turning to her desk, wrote a few lines proposing to send them in the morning.

Mr. Yates, however, was destined never to receive the letter for, as sometimes happens when human beings undertake the management of each other's affairs, an unforeseen event definitely settled the matter in a very different way from that anticipated by those concerned.

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE Mrs. Arlingford was toiling over the problem that had been given her to solve, the object of her solicitude, Gertrude herself, was holding as late a vigil. Instead of going to bed, as her aunt had bidden her hours ago, daylight found her sitting before the fire in her own room, no longer the brilliant debutante, but a listless, pale and most unhappy looking young woman.

New Year's Day had dawned brilliantly for her, this New Year's Day which she was to celebrate for the first time by "receiving." The weather in itself was exhilarating enough without the aid of the cheerful bustle of preparation going on in the house. With youth and beauty and good health and the anticipation of pleasure to come, this day of all others bade fair to be one of the happiest of Gertrude's life. But before night fell it proved to be the most unhappy. The day's excitement and the night's homage became but a diversion. She was remarkably radiant and beautiful, but it was as one is radiant and beautiful in a high fever. When the excitement had subsided the reaction came and left her exhausted. The fact was that Gertrude had that afternoon been poisoned by that venomous thing known as an anonymous letter.

The worldly wise may smile and shake their heads and talk of destroying such missives without giving them a second thought, but the oldest, time-scarred veteran among us all is not impervious to the insidious virus contained in an anonymous letter. No reason, no argument, will antidote it.

And Gertrude succumbed to it—not without a struggle, not without many struggles, but none the less surely.

This letter, which had arrived late in the day, was postmarked Paris, and was written in a disguised hand, evidently a woman's.

"I write to you," it said, "to let you know that a certain navy officer, Mr. A., is not the sort of gentleman for you to encourage. He said before a whole lot of people that you were *in love* with him, and that he was *sorry* for you, because there was positively *no hope*. I will say that I believe Mr. A. had been drinking too

much wine, but that is no excuse for a man saying a thing like that about a lady, especially as there were people there who knew you, and some of them know that you have always been very *friendly* with Mr. A., and are inclined to believe what he said *is true*.

A FRIEND.

“P. S.—They say that you have a rival in a certain Mrs. M., who has been visiting Naples. She has been receiving lots of attention from everybody, but *he* is particularly devoted.”

The malicious motive of this note was so manifest; the conduct ascribed to Arthur was so foreign to his character, as Gertrude knew it; it was so evident that the writer's intent was to arouse her pride and indignation against him beyond quelling, knowing well that she would scorn to question him—all this was so plain that with any of the worldly wise people aforementioned, it might have overshot its mark.

But Gertrude was not of this class. She did not stop to reason or criticise. It was not a question of thought with her, but of feeling. When the meaning of the words broke through her unsuspecting innocence and penetrated her heart, she grew cold and sick. She did not know what to do with the poisonous intruders. Dazed and bewildered, she looked helplessly around in search of help, of assistance, in her need. But in that moment even her intimate surroundings seemed to have changed their aspect. She felt as though she had just returned to the room from a long absence, every familiar object appeared so strange. The furniture, the pictures, the ornaments, all the little odds and ends about the apartment so imbued with her daily life, seemed sentient things which were silently aware of the dreadful, humiliating charge.

She grew nervous and thought she was about to faint, and, putting her hand to her throat, she started to her feet. As she did so her fingers came in contact with a small blue locket that was fastened to a velvet band around her neck, Arthur's locket. It acted as a touchstone and restored to Gertrude full possession of her senses. Hurriedly unfastening the band, she placed it on the table. Then opening wide the window she stood in the frosty air trying to recover herself. Presently she came back to the table and read the letter again.

Then at last the blood began to course once more through her veins more and more rapidly, until her receding faculties paused and, gathering force, swept back again like a wave and broke in a

torrent of contempt and indignation. Tearing the letter into fragments, she threw the pieces on the floor, and, putting her foot upon them, while her eyes grew hot and her breath came hard and fast, she whispered to herself, "It is false! He never said it! How *dare* they write such a thing to me!"

Shaking back the damp hair from her forehead, she paced the floor, her hands clenching and unclenching themselves, her breast heaving and the hot blood dyeing her cheeks, repeating, "It is false! How dare they! Oh, how dare they!" until, exhausted by her emotion, she sank into a chair and hid her face in her trembling hands.

But the moment her ebullition of passion had subsided, her thoughts, like flies, grew busy with the wound. The words of the letter danced before her eyes, each obtruding itself upon her notice, insisting on being read again and again, mocking her, taunting her with their possibilities of truth, while at each noise, the clink of the falling ashes or the closing of a distant door, she started guiltily and shrank within herself.

And what even if Arthur had not uttered the words? Other people must have had the thought and said it! Even if no one but the writer of this wretched note had conceived such a thing, that was one person, and that was intolerable. And all the time that she cried so vehemently "It is false! Arthur never said such a thing!" she was aware that down in the bottom of her heart there was a miserable little doubt crawling, insinuating itself into her nobler wrath with disloyal "mights" and "ifs," with officious sympathy picturing circumstances under which Arthur could be pardoned or excused for hinting such a thing, for of course it was exaggerated, and he never could have expressed himself exactly as the letter charged!

Bewildered by these fancies, she turned from them, sick in mind and body. Through it all she could not quite understand where the deathly hurt was. Until at last, as the Inquisitor of old stretched an unwilling witness on the rack to extort his testimony, so Gertrude fiercely turned upon herself and commenced to lay bare her heart, determined to discover what word or act of hers could ever give birth to such a shameful accusation.

From the day when she first met Arthur in the Carleton railway station, after their long separation, to the night when he left Newport to join his ship, she recalled every act, every word of hers and of his, and, holding it up in the pitiless light of this letter, she

scanned it with unflinching severity. She knew who this "lady" who had been visiting Naples was, this woman to whom Arthur was so attentive, this "rival!" And as she repeated the odious word she felt in her heart as though she could do some mortal injury to the person who had offered her this last unpardonable insult. Her rival, indeed! Yes, she knew who this woman was. For every Friday afternoon since Arthur's departure, Gertrude had purchased the *The Army and Navy News*. And in the last number there had been a long article descriptive of a reception aboard the "Comet," and among the guests had appeared the name of Mrs. Alfred Merrin of New York. Her meeting with Mrs. Merrin at the ball at the Marine College was fresh enough in her memory. At the time, her attention had been drawn to the woman by her pertinacity in claiming Arthur for a dance which she, Gertrude, saw plainly enough did not belong to her, and she had been surprised at Arthur's prompt, though grave, acquiescence. Her thoughts had persisted in reverting to the occurrence all that evening, with a strange feeling of unrest which the triviality of the incident did not warrant. Rumor, gossip and after-events did, however, warrant the sensation of repugnance which she had experienced at their first encounter for this black-eyed, red-lipped beauty. And now she had lived to hear this woman spoken of as her "rival"! With her lips pressed together and her eyes half closed, Gertrude's soul was darkened for a moment with intense hatred of Mrs. Merrin.

Then her thoughts groped their way from the night of this ball and the tragic news which had marked its ending, to the sad journey back to Washington, her uncle's funeral, her aunt's despair, and Arthur's comradeship, which had lightened and warmed for her those dark and gloomy days. As she recalled the long walks and conversations she and Arthur had had together during this period when the grief of their elders had left them much alone, Gertrude lost herself in the memory, forgetful for the moment of the cause of this retrospect. In those sad days he was like the Arthur of their early years, who cared only for her companionship, who was so thoughtful, so tender and gentle and yet withal so strong and brave. And a wistful smile trembled around her mouth, and her eyes grew moist as she recalled incident after incident of their long friendship, and her lips unconsciously whispered, "My own dear boy!"

How little he knew, how little any of them knew, at the time of

the graduation ceremonies at Carleton, when Kate had reproached her for being indifferent to his triumph in winning the boat race, that she had whispered those same words to herself throughout the struggle. They had been surprised because he had won. She had not; she knew he would win. Not care? There was not a person in that great crowd, no, not even his mother, who was prouder of him than she. She would not let him know it, she scarcely knew why. No one knew how much she cared, except, perhaps, Mr. Dudley. He cared so much for Arthur and, well, yes, for her, too, that he had guessed it on looking up into her face when Arthur made his last desperate effort. She thought of Dudley now, in a vague way as her fancy, relieved from the stress put upon it, gladly wandered aimlessly away. But arriving aboard the "Comet" in the harbor of Naples, her thoughts, with a quick rebound, returned to the wretched letter which lay in fragments at her feet. Clenching her hands, she arose quickly and paced the floor, fiercely, indignantly, forcing her thoughts away from light memories to the task she had set them, the task of finding a reason in her past conduct for this disgraceful charge.

Had she done an unmaidenly thing in asking Arthur to go with them on the yacht to Newport? Surely not. She had asked him because Kate had wished it, and she had told him so.

Then, standing with her hands clasped before her and her eyes upon the floor, she went over the long conversation they had had that moonlight night on the water. She remembered every word. She remembered her distress at hearing him say that he was not good, that he no longer believed in the religion they had both been taught to believe, that he was outside the sanctuary of the church, and her secret longing to be the means of bringing him back, to go out to him in the darkness in which he had lost himself and save him, or, yes—remain there with him to help him in his hour of need, as she had used to do when he had got himself into trouble with his earthly father. And when he recalled those days, and said that if any one could help him to be good, it was she, that she used to when they were children, did she remember? She had, indeed, remembered, and in silent sympathy had placed her hand in his. It was a simple act of friendship. She had often thought of it since, but never had it seemed unwarranted or unwomanly. And yet, now, in the light of that letter! Was it possible, oh, could it be possi-

ble that he had misconstrued it! And the blood slowly mantled her cheeks.

Then, like a flash of light making all dazzlingly clear where before was doubt and obscurity, came the memory of Arthur's strange conduct the next night at the ball at the Casino. Was it so, then! She never had understood the meaning of his pointed neglect of the most ordinary attention to her that night. Was this the solution of the riddle! Fool, that she had been! Was it not plain enough? He had flaunted his devotion to that woman in her face to let her, Gertrude, understand that his childish attachment was a thing of the past and not to be renewed by a pressure of the hand. She had cried that night after he had gone, because she had felt hurt and humiliated, and that, too, by the only man who had the power to hurt and humiliate her; but she had not understood the extent of her wrong. Other people had seen what he meant, had understood it, only she had been stupid and blind! So blind and stupid that it had needed this cruel blow to open her eyes!

"Why, God help me!" she cried, "that must be it!" And the blood mounted to her temples and she grew hot from head to foot, while the moisture gathered on her forehead, and her fingers rubbed the palms of her hands, as she stood aghast at the idea. Then with her eyes filling and her teeth biting into her lip, her whole form seemed to droop and wilt. Sinking to the floor by the chair she had occupied, she hid her face in her arms and burst into tears.

It was a long while before Gertrude's sobs died away in the silence of the room. Finally raising her head, she leaned her arm upon the chair and with her cheek upon her hand she gazed listlessly into the fire. As the glowing coals shifted and settled, fragments of scenes and words from the forgotten past, irrelevant trifles, drifted aimlessly across her mind. She regarded them apathetically, letting her fancy float after them or away from them with indifference.

An hour passed by and the fire was almost out. At last, chilled and constrained by her fixed attitude, she arose, with a deep sigh. As though following some train of ideas, she went to a cabinet in the corner of the room and took from a secret recess a box and emptied its contents on the table. There was a package of letters in a boyish hand, blotted and scratched and unevenly folded, a tiny gold ring, a heart made of shell and a number of

other trifles pertaining to the era of childhood. Then there were a few dried flowers, some "German favors," notes and invitations to various social entertainments at the Marine College. Near these lay the blue locket which she had discarded. Taking this up she opened it, disclosing on one side a picture of Arthur when a boy and on the other a curl of soft brown hair. Whatever had been her intention in bringing out these other mementoes, Gertrude seemed to have forgotten it as she gazed at this,

For a long time she stood lost in thought, her color gradually coming and going, her breast rising and falling, and a warm mist suffusing her eyes. Suddenly she pressed the locket to her lips again and again with passionate vehemence, and cried aloud with a sort of defiance, "It is true! It is all true! I do love him, I *love* him, but—" With trembling hands she gathered up the little mementoes and quietly put them in the fire. Then with a very pale face and a long, deep breath she drew herself erect and said, "There is an end of it!"

* * * * *

A few hours later and Gertrude was fascinating old and young in her large assemblage of guests by her splendid beauty, her ready wit and radiant animation. Never had her color been so rich or her eyes so bright. It was unnatural, some of the elderly ladies present thought, and whispered to each other what a pity it was that so young and pretty a girl should resort to artificial means to heighten her own natural charms.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was noon of the day following the reception. Gertrude, in a dainty tea-gown, sat by the window of her room. A book lay open in her lap, but her gaze was fixed listlessly on the flakes of snow that were drifting outside, while the dark circles under her eyes and the paleness of her face betokened little interest in her present surroundings.

There was a tap at the door and Mrs. Arlingford's maid appeared, bearing a salver.

"I have brought you your breakfast, Miss," she said. "I did not think you would be up so soon. I'll fix it for you here by the fire."

Gertrude watched the woman's movements with that languid interest which convalescents from severe illness feel in small matters. Then as the maid urged her to come and eat, she answered fretfully, "Leave it there, Mary, I'll come presently."

"Very well, Miss, only you had better take it while it is hot." Then, as she was leaving the room, the servant added, "Your aunt, Miss, told me to say, if you were up, that she would like to see you after you have had your breakfast."

"Very well," replied Gertrude, "tell my aunt I will be with her in a moment."

Rising as the door closed, she went to the table, and, pouring out a cup of coffee, drank it slowly, standing by the fire. Taking up a mirror she looked at her pale face and dark eyes, then, with a slight shrug of indifference, she put the glass down and went to her aunt's room. She found that lady paler and more hollow-eyed than herself; in fact, Gertrude thought she had never seen her aunt look so old and haggard.

"Are you not feeling well, Aunt Mary?" she said, after the usual morning greetings, seating herself by the lounge, on which Mrs. Arlingford was lying.

"I have a slight headache," said her aunt. "It is nothing much. I am getting too old to be able to stay up late at night without paying for it."

"I am sorry you don't feel well," said Gertrude. "I would have been in before, only I thought you were asleep."

"How does it happen that you are up so early?" said her aunt. "You look pale, too, I hope you did not get tired last night. Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Very much," replied Gertrude, abstractedly, "very much indeed."

"I thought you did," said her aunt. "I never saw you look so well. I felt quite proud of you. I am afraid it would make you vain if I was to tell you all the compliments you received," she added, with an effort at playfulness that sounded to her own ears so feigned as to make her uneasy lest Gertrude should detect its hollowness.

"It was very good of you to go to so much trouble on my account," said Gertrude, "and I am glad that you were pleased with me. You have always been very good to me. I wish I could make you some return."

"Don't say that," said Mrs. Arlingford, hastily; "you are a dear child, and have always been a great comfort to me. Just continue to be to me what you are—I ask for nothing else."

With her mind intent on the communication she was about to make, Mrs. Arlingford applied Gertrude's words instantly to that subject. She was guiltily suspicious of her preoccupied manner, and this remark made her heart leap with fear. It sounded as though Gertrude was willing to sacrifice herself upon the altar which Mrs. Arlingford had built. Her words of gratitude and affection, too, at this time, made her heart sick.

Ever since the early dawn, when the fact had been forced upon her that the time had come when she must speak to Gertrude about Mr. Yates, she had been nerving herself up to the effort. But now all her determination was leaving her. She felt as though she could not make so much as the remotest suggestion of the alliance she had plotted. Her mind turned this way and that in the effort to escape, as it had successfully done on previous occasions. A dozen times she declared to herself that she would postpone the matter until later in the day, but each time Mr. Yates' parting words rang in her ears, and with the unshaped dread they had inspired she felt that she dared not shirk the task. The crisis of the past year had come, and it must be met. After all, what did it matter? Gertrude would certainly refuse to marry Mr. Yates, and all the words that she, Mrs. Arlingford, might utter

would be powerless to alter her decision. The poor man had himself ruined his own prospects.

Then Mrs. Arlingford nervously coughed, preparatory to saying something, she scarcely knew what, when, to her consternation, Gertrude broached the subject that lay hidden in her mind.

"I am afraid you took cold last night," she said. "Why did you let Mr. Yates keep you down-stairs so long?"

"He wanted to talk to me," said Mrs. Arlingford, mechanically, with a feeling that all this had been done and said long before in some dim age, "he wanted to talk to me about you."

"Yes?" said Gertrude, still quietly, although the color came slowly into her face.

"Yes, my dear, Mr. Yates loves you and wants to marry you."

Naturally enough Mrs. Arlingford expected that this disclosure, which had halted upon her tongue for so many weary months and which at last had required all her strength of will to utter, would produce a commensurately startling effect. As one deceived into making a desperate leap downward in the darkness is jarred by finding only the level ground in front, so Mrs. Arlingford was bewildered by the calm, matter-of-fact manner in which Gertrude received her announcement. For, without even raising her head, she simply replied, "Indeed!" in a cold, inquiring tone. At the same time a curiously hard expression came into her face, a drooping of the eyelids, and compressing of the lips, that was not pretty.

Mrs. Arlingford was relieved and yet puzzled. Feeling that she must say something, she mechanically uttered the stereotyped phrase, "Perhaps I have been too sudden. Was it entirely unexpected, my dear?"

"I knew that he cared for me," said Gertrude; "I did not know that he wanted—to marry me."

"Well, well," replied Mrs. Arlingford, wearied by the reaction, now that the crisis was past, and anxious for a rest, "there is no necessity for you to worry about it now. We will talk it all over some other time." And then, with a certain constraint as if discharging a duty, she added, "Mr. Yates is a very estimable man. He has been a good friend to your poor uncle and to me. I believe that he—that he would—make you a good husband," she was going to say, but her lips refused to utter the lie and she concluded, lamely, "would try to make you happy."

"Aunt Mary," said Gertrude, raising her head with an air of

determination and meeting Mrs. Arlingford's eyes, "you would like me to marry Mr. Yates, would you not?"

Mrs. Arlingford stared at her niece blankly for a moment, and then a slight color stole into her pale, careworn face, and she evaded Gertrude's gaze and looked uneasily to the right and to the left. Finally she exclaimed in an injured, irritated voice, "I want you to consult your own happiness, Gertrude."

"But would it please you, Aunt Mary?" persisted Gertrude. "You have always seemed to think so highly of Mr. Yates," she continued, as Mrs. Arlingford made no reply, "and somehow I have an idea that you would like to have me marry him. You have been like a mother to me, auntie, dear, and—and—"

As Gertrude hesitated Mrs. Arlingford said mechanically, "And what?"

"And if you wish it," said Gertrude, "I will marry Mr. Yates."

"What!" cried Mrs. Arlingford, arising from the sofa, "you will marry him! You will marry Mr. Yates! Gertrude, are you mad?" And then, as Gertrude's apathy gave way to a look of astonishment, she continued, in a moderated tone, "I don't quite understand. I did not know that you loved Mr. Yates."

"I don't," replied Gertrude, slowly shaking her head.

"You don't love him? Then why are you willing to marry him?" exclaimed Mrs. Arlingford, struggling to repress her agitation. For a moment Gertrude made no reply. Although she maintained her forced calmness and passive demeanor, she appeared puzzled by her aunt's words and manner. A slight gleam of hope, of relief, of something difficult to define, came into her face.

"Why are you willing to marry Mr. Yates, Gertrude?"

And as Mrs. Arlingford repeated the question peremptorily, she came and stood in front of the girl, watching her closely.

With her lowered eyes fastened upon a ring which she slowly twisted upon her finger, Gertrude, pale and thoughtful, at first made no answer. Then finally looking up and meeting her aunt's gaze, she calmly replied,

"I am willing to marry him because you wish it."

"But I don't wish it!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlingford, and then suddenly remembering her compact she hastily added, "That is, of course, I do wish it, but—oh, I don't know what I am saying!" she cried, nervously intertwining her fingers. With a sudden effort she controlled herself, and laying her hand on Gertrude's

shoulder, she continued, "I don't want to lose my girl. The idea of your marrying any one, of your marrying at all, has upset me."

"Don't worry about me, auntie," said Gertrude, coldly, "it does not matter."

"But it does matter!" replied Mrs. Arlingford, with asperity. "Have you no feeling on such a subject? Most girls have."

"No," said Gertrude.

"That is very strange," said her aunt. "I don't think you are entirely frank with me."

To which Gertrude made no reply.

"Well, well," said her aunt, "leave me now for a little while. I am tired and nervous this morning; we will talk of this again. I think I will try and get a little rest."

Gertrude arose, and kissing her aunt, silently left the room. The door had scarcely closed upon her when a servant entered with the announcement that Mr. Yates was in the parlor and desired to see Mrs. Arlingford.

"Tell him that I cannot see him," replied Mrs. Arlingford abruptly. "Say that I am not well, and that he must excuse me. Ask him to call again this afternoon."

"He says that he would like very much to see you just for a moment, ma'am," ventured the girl.

"Do as I tell you!" interrupted Mrs. Arlingford, sharply.

Then as the door closed, she sank into a chair, and burying her face in her hands rocked to and fro, murmuring to herself, "Was ever a woman so tried as I am! She leaves it to me to decide. Me of all persons. Oh, I cannot do it! I cannot!"

Again there was a tap at the door, and Mrs. Arlingford raising her head, cried angrily, "Who is there?"

The voice of her maid replied, "It is me, ma'am, can I speak to you just a minute, if you please?"

"Come in, in Heaven's name! Cannot I have a moment's peace! What do you want?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, I'm sure," said the woman, in great trepidation, "but Mr. Yates, he acts so queer. I gave him your message and he talked so strange and said he must see you or something would happen. And he made me bring this card up for you to read. I told him you were sick, but he would not listen to me."

Mrs. Arlingford took the card from her hand and read the hurriedly scrawled words:

"I can't stand this any longer! I want this business ended right now. You *must* see me!"

"If I *must*," said Mrs. Arlingford grimly to herself, "I suppose I must. Show Mr. Yates up," she continued to the servant.

She had passed her hysterical state now and had arrived at a condition when, being worn out she did not care very much what happened. Nevertheless she was startled at Mr. Yates' appearance when he entered. His skin was pale and his features worked nervously, his face was like a grotesque mask, from which the drunken devil that had put it on peeped through bloodshot eyes, ripe for mischief. Mr. Yates' appearance might well have startled any woman. Mrs. Arlingford assumed a dignity she was far from feeling, as he stood silently before her and said, "Well, sir, you insist on seeing me, notwithstanding that I tell you I am sick. What is it you have to say?"

"This business has got to come to an end, that's all," said Yates, compressing his pale lips.

"Mr. Yates," said Mrs. Arlingford, arising to her feet in sudden desperation, "last night you told me that you wished to God that you had never laid your eyes on my face. I can tell you, sir, that you don't wish it more earnestly than I do at this moment. I rue the day that I ever met you, and I would give everything I have in the world to be rid of you forever!"

"You would?" retorted Yates fiercely. "But I notice all the same you were glad enough to have me around when your husband died without a cent to pay back what he stole! You started all this—I didn't! And now you want to get out of it! I know it! I'm not blind, am I? I can see well enough that you don't want me to marry Gertrude! But you've got to keep your promise, just the same! And now I want to know, once and for all, are you going to make her marry me or not? Say!"

For a moment Mrs. Arlingford stood silently looking at him, overwhelmed by his fiery manner of speech, sick with worry and fear. "How can I make her marry you?" she finally cried.

"That is nothing to me," said Yates, doggedly. "You were ready enough to say that you could when you wanted my help. Are you going to give her to me or not?"

Again Mrs. Arlingford silently looked at him. There had been a time, not very long ago, when she had felt only contempt for this man, who had been as a puppet in her hands. Now she feared him, and he knew it. In vain did she struggle with herself

to meet his inflamed, glassy eyes without flinching; it was a mortal battle for which she was unequal. Worn out by the emotion and physical exhaustion of the last twenty-four hours, her fortitude gave way beneath his threatening gaze, and she sank back in her chair with a groan.

"Well!" demanded Yates, with drunken defiance.

"I have spoken to her," said Mrs. Arlingford, feebly.

"You have!" cried Yates, advancing close to her, his eyes blazing and his hot breath almost in her face. "What did she say?"

As Mrs. Arlingford shrank back she felt a sudden sense of relief that Gertrude had put it in her power to make the answer a favorable one. Personal violence seemed at this moment so imminent, and she thought with a gasp of horror of becoming the subject of a brutal assault. Yet, in her physical fear, the idea of sacrificing Gertrude to him seemed so dreadful that even to save herself she hesitated.

Then Mr. Yates pressed still closer. She looked up at the savage eyes of the man standing over her, and as he repeated with monotonous iteration, "Well? well? well?" she finally answered, as a chidden child might have said the hated lesson, "She is willing to do as I say."

"Then she will marry me!" cried Yates. "She will marry me?"

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Arlingford.

"That won't do!" retorted Yates, roughly. "I've had enough of that! Say yes or no, whether she shall marry me, or, by God! I'll—" and a step nearer and a significant shake of the head finished the sentence.

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Mrs. Arlingford, shrinking back and extending her trembling, withered hands appealingly.

Staring at her stupidly for a moment, as though his mind was unable to receive this surrender in time to quell the brutal instincts which were getting control of him, Yates finally turned away muttering to himself, "I'll go and tell her what you say. I'll settle this matter right now. She shall marry me, or I'll know the reason why! I'm as good a man as any of them!"

Fumbling with the door, unable to open it, he glanced back suspiciously at Mrs. Arlingford, sitting motionless in her chair, then succeeding in turning the handle, and still muttering incoherently, he left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

HALF an hour later Gertrude knocked at her aunt's apartments and receiving no response, softly entered. At first she thought her aunt was asleep in her chair and was about to withdraw, but detecting something unnatural in her appearance, she discovered that she had fainted. Hastily summoning assistance, Gertrude revived her with some difficulty and got her to bed. The doctor being sent for announced that Mrs. Arlingford was suffering from nervous prostration. The unusual social demands of New Year's Day had evidently overtaxed her strength, and she must be kept quiet and entirely free from any disturbing influences. It was not the first time that the lady had had such an attack, but it was the first time that the old doctor, who had been the Arlingford's family physician time out of mind, had impressed Gertrude uneasily with a sense of responsibility in the care of her aunt.

For three days and nights she did not leave the patient's bedside, and during that time she did not permit her to revert to the subject that was uppermost in the minds of both, so that it was not until the fourth day, when her aunt was convalescent and sitting propped up in an easy chair, that Gertrude told her of her interview with Mr. Yates.

"He was very much excited," she said, in a perfunctory manner, as though the story concerned some one else, "and he acted very strangely. He told me that he had loved me ever since I was a child, and would give me anything and do everything to make me happy, and all that. And he cried about it. I told him I did not love him, and that I did not think I ever would love him, but that I respected him and that if you desired it and he was willing to accept me under these conditions, I would marry him." All this without a change of color or other indication of feeling.

"He told me," she continued, "that he had just left you and that you did wish it very much, that you had wished it for a year. And he recalled to my mind things you had said and done, show-

ing how much you wished it. Did you really desire it so much, auntie, dear? And are you satisfied now?"

The poor woman gazed at the fire with an immovable countenance and made no reply.

"I am so glad to be able to do something to make you happy," continued Gertrude, anxiously seeking for an assurance that her reckless act carried some good to some one she loved; "to be able to feel as though I was making some return to you for all your kindness to me." Then noticing a tear slowly making its escape from Mrs. Arlingford's half closed eyes, she continued, "There, there, I won't talk about it any more."

"Go on," said Mrs. Arlingford.

"But that is all," said Gertrude, "except that a little while ago he brought me this." And she held up her hand, on the third finger of which was a magnificent solitaire diamond.

"What is the matter with your hand?" said her aunt. For Gertrude had her handkerchief bound around it.

The color flamed in the girl's pale cheeks as she replied,

"Nothing," at the same time removing the bit of lace. Her color deepened as she looked at her hand and a curious expression came into her face. Mr. Yates' lips had been pressed upon that hand after he had placed the ring upon it, and Gertrude, in the privacy of her own room, had roughly tried to scour the kiss away. But it had burned and corroded deeper than she knew, too deep to be effaced, and instinctively she concealed the place in her handkerchief as though it had been a shameful scar.

"But, Gertrude, dear," said her aunt, pleadingly, "I would not wear the ring just yet. Something may happen to break this engagement: there is no necessity for making it known. In fact," she added, with a feeble attempt at resuming her old authority, which these recent events seemed to have weakened, "in fact I do not think it wise that you should do so. It is not at all certain that you will marry Mr. Yates, after all, and it is best that your engagement should not be known."

"But I want it known," said Gertrude, determinedly, almost defiantly. And then as she felt her aunt's dim eyes fixed upon her curiously, she arose and said lightly, "It would become known anyway. These things always do, and I would rather make no secret of it."

And before the matter was twenty-four hours older it was the talk of the town. And those good ladies, mothers of marriage-

able daughters themselves, who had denounced Gertrude's coquettish frivolity in not getting married, declared that it was very strange that so young and pretty a girl should marry such a very ordinary individual as Mr. Yates. They wondered that Mrs. Arlingford would sanction it. It was really very odd. While the young ladies themselves protested that after all the talk about Gertrude Alden's success, her beauty and her money and all the rest of it, she had made a very queer match. At the same time "congratulations" poured in upon the prospective bride from every quarter.

There was one marked exception in this general felicitation. None came from the old mansion on Lafayette Square where Catherine, the mother of Arthur, and Kate, his loyal sister, mourned over the death of their cherished hopes.

They learned the news from Gertrude herself during her aunt's illness. She told it in the matter-of-fact, indifferent way in which she had confided it to her aunt. She had come over to see Kate for a few moments while her patient was asleep, and standing by the window tapping her hand with one of her gloves, she half turned around to where Mrs. Arlingford was sitting by the fire, and said,

"I suppose I ought to tell you the first, Aunt Catherine. I am engaged to Mr. Yates."

Kate, who was sitting near dropped the embroidery on which she was at work, and looking at Gertrude in a startled way to see if she was in earnest, exclaimed in a deprecatory, protesting tone,

"Oh, Gertrude!"

"Oh, Katie!" retorted Gertrude in mimicry, which, however, was not very mirthful in its tone.

And straightway Kate began to weep.

"It seems to me a very odd way you have of congratulating me," said Gertrude.

"I don't care," said Kate, bitterly, "I can't congratulate you."

"And why not?" exclaimed Gertrude resentfully. "Mr. Yates is a gentleman, is he not? He is honest, and brave, and generous, and he is certainly an *honorable* man!" And Gertrude's eyes flashed and her lips compressed as she emphasized the word, thinking no doubt of that other man who, if the letter spoke truth, was not so honorable.

But Kate made no other response than to seek her handkerchief and dry her eyes.

Then Mrs. Arlingford, who had remained silent all this time, arose, and, going to Gertrude's side, put her arms around her neck and whispered, "I congratulate you, my pet, and I will pray for you every night that you may be very happy."

The sudden reaction from defiance to the tenderness of her aunt's caress was almost too much for Gertrude's power of self-control. For the last few days her nerves had been strung up with an unnatural tension, and at these first words of affection and sympathy the impulse to lay her head upon her Aunt Catherine's breast and relieve her overburdened heart by giving way to tears, was almost irresistible.

She struggled bravely, however, against the weakness and conquered it, although she was unable to make any reply to Mrs. Arlingford's words. And when that gentle lady essayed to raise her face, Gertrude resisted. She could not meet the gaze of Arthur's mother at that moment. But afterward, when she took her departure and kissed her aunt affectionately, she forced herself to meet the tender, searching, soft brown eyes that looked at her so wistfully, meet them calmly and without flinching, so that Mrs. Arlingford turned away with a sigh, thinking "She does not care," and wondering with unreasoning bitterness, "if, after all, that man's money had won her dear girl."

Kate meantime had stolen from the room.

Gertrude left the house understanding their thoughts quite well. She had accomplished her object, but her success made her miserable. She was glad that the major had not been there. She doubted if she could have submitted to the contemplation of his calm, gray eyes. He was different from her Aunt Catherine or Kate—he would have read her secret through it all. Crouching upon the floor half an hour later, hiding her hot, tear-stained face from the light, Gertrude's slight figure, a dishevel of velvet, furs and golden hair, presented in its utter abandonment a pitiful picture. Outraged pride had triumphed over love. Reason, doubts, arguments, pleading, all were of no avail. Even when the memory of that kiss imprinted upon her hand by her future husband, Mr. Yates, sent a hot, indignant flush all over her body and made her shrink within herself and forced her dimly to realize what the coming sacrifice might mean, she set her teeth together and would not yield an inch. She had vanquished her love, but alas for the victor!

CHAPTER XVIII.

EARLY morning on the Bay of Naples, some three months after the events narrated in the last chapter, that cool quiet hour of early morning before the rising of the sun, that most delightful fairy hour to be upon the water, when the gray outlines of the houses on the shore are just visible, suggesting by the obscurity of their surroundings all manner of romance, when every dim tower and blank wall is invested with a mysterious interest of its own, and each common boat that rises and falls with the movement of the waves has vague possibilities of adventure. And as the sun's first level rays tip with gold the picturesque white towns asleep upon the shore, gradually revealing the secrets of the darkness, betraying the little blue-eyed wanton wavelets whispering and laughing on the sandy beach and glinting over the quiet waters till they awaken with their touch the distant, rugged shores of Ischia and the hazy coast of Capri, life seems well worth the living for just this one hour on the Bay of Naples. It was on such a morning in the early part of April that the United States steamer "Comet" lay at anchor in the harbor. The crew had been roused out, the hammocks were lashed and stowed in the nettings, while the pumps were sending a liberal supply of water over the decks preparatory to that arduous operation known as "holy-stoning down."

Midshipman Arlingford, who had just come off watch, was seated, barefooted, on the bitts forward, sipping his early morning cup of coffee. His friend Dudley, in more conventional costume, stood near him waiting for the market boat to take him ashore, his attention divided between the water that was being splashed in dangerous proximity to his polished shoes, and a narrative that he was giving Arthur of the incidents of a hop he had attended the night before on board of a British man-of-war lying near them.

"I tell you what," concluded Dudley, enthusiastically, "they are as nice a lot of fellows as I ever met. From the admiral down

they could not do too much for us, and the way they set up the 'fizz' as they call it, was enough to make your head swim."

"I don't doubt it," said Arthur, "judging by the way you came over the side. It was the swippiest crowd I ever saw."

"Wasn't it!" said Curley, his eyes dancing with fun as he looked up at Arthur. "By George, you would have thought the first luff was my dearest friend when we parted last night! A long-lost brother was nothing to it. I don't believe he will be so affectionate this morning."

"No," said Arthur, dryly, "I don't think he will. And what is more, you will be hearing from him presently, if you don't bear a hand and get out of this."

And sure enough at this moment the voice of the gentleman in question was audible from the upper deck calling out gruffly, "Has that market boat left yet?" And as some one replied, "No, sir," "Then why the devil hasn't it? Call away the dingy, Mr. Piper!"

"Just so," said Curley, softly, as the boatswain's pipe rang out; "I thought his hat wouldn't fit him this morning."

"Don't forget my tobacco," said Arthur.

"All right," replied Curley, imperturbably consulting his memorandum. "There was something Miller wanted, and I can't for the life of me remember what it was. 'Go to the consul for the mail.' 'Cologne,' 'butter,' 'vegetables, meat.' Oh, here it is; 'Call on Miller's girl,' and 'sticking plaster.'"

"Put my tobacco down," said Arthur, "or you will forget it."

"It is down," said Curley, "next to Miller's things."

But at this juncture the voice of the first lieutenant was again heard overhead in impatient tones, "Messenger boy, give my compliments to Mr. Dudley, and say I don't desire that boat to be kept waiting any longer."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself," said Curley, under his breath, and then shouting for the steward he went up the ladder with an appearance of great haste.

By eight bells the decks were dry and immaculate, the brass work glittering, the rigging flemished down, and the crew shifted into white, while the jaunty appearance of the ship, with the stars and stripes lazily floating aloft, might well make the heart of an exiled American thrill with glad pride. By nine o'clock the dingy had returned, and that great event in a sailor's life, the arrival of a

home mail, threw all hands into excitement. The "Comet" had dropped her anchor only the day before, after a short cruise, and the ship's mail for the last two or three weeks had been forwarded to the consul at Naples, so that it was with unusual eagerness that the officers aft, as well as the sailor men forward, waited to see what luck would bring them in the shape of letters. After the distribution some are made happy, and some are sad, while those who have received no news at all console themselves with the thought that no news is good news, and turn to the Army and Navy papers to see who is dead or who has resigned, and the consequent changes and promotions.

Arthur's mail was a large one, as it generally was, and as he looked it over a very fair insight into the degree of interest inspired by the writers in his mind, could have been obtained from the sorting the letters received. The first that he opened was in Gertrude's handwriting.

"I have received your letter," she said, after a few unimportant words, "and I thank you for your congratulations on my engagement, although I do not altogether understand why you speak of it as you do. I had nothing to 'confide' until Mr. Yates did me the honor to ask me to marry him, and then I told your mother, knowing that she would tell you. As for my engagement 'separating us forever,' I have always considered you as my brother, and I do not think that brothers abandon their sisters entirely on such occasions, do they? Then again I must protest against your reviving that old fancy of yours about my being so much better than other women. I am not. I think perhaps you have seen very few women, and so have not had experience enough to understand those you have met. I should be glad to think that your regard for me had helped you, even though ever so little, in doing right through the past years, during which we were such good friends, but I take little credit to myself. Your own sense of honor and honesty used to be your guide, not I. Under the circumstances, therefore, I cannot see why you should say that my marriage will be to you like the loss of your religion. Is not all that a little strained? To use your own simile, which is not a very good one, if the cable which holds you to a belief in better things, and to the ambition to lead a life of which not only I, but all your friends might be proud, is made of no better material than a sentimental regard for my opinion, it would soon break of its own weight, and my marriage can have little to do with it. At the same time I will confess that portions of your letter made me unhappy, because, for your dear mother's sake as well as your own, I don't like to hear you talk in such a reckless way. However, I have been comforted by the recollection of what you once said of your father, that although he had no religious faith, he was

too much of a gentleman to do wrong. My marriage ought to make no difference in our friendship, and as far as I am concerned it will not. I hope you will be home in time for the ceremony, and so, with kind regards to Mr. Dudley, I remain, as always,

“Your sincere friend,

“GERTRUDE ALDEN.”

Arthur sat for a long time deep in thought after reading this letter. Then rousing himself he placed the note in his breast pocket, and turning over the envelopes at his side, selected one bearing the Paris postmark. This epistle was a long one from Mrs. Merrin, devoted mainly to a description of the delights of Paris, where she had been visiting for the past month.

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“The opera, last night,” she said, “full dress, and then a ball. The night before, a *salon*, very stupid, and afterward a masquerade, which was just gorgeous. I never had such a time in my life before. I went as Cleopatra, and I could not begin to tell you all the nice things that were said to me. In fact I get more flattery here than I know what to do with, and the gentlemen are all so attentive; too attentive, in fact. Of course I am very discreet. Just as a certain gentleman was in Naples. No, not quite as discreet as that, either, because your discretion is something I can never hope to equal. Perhaps you are right, though I never believed that you were quite sincere in adopting that frigid demeanor purely on my account. When a man cares for a woman he is not so fearful of what people will say; it is only when he is indifferent that he becomes so excessively careful of her reputation. Under the circumstances, having more attention than I know what to do with, I don’t know why I should bother to write to you, or why I should want you to come to Paris, except—well, except that I do. I have a curiosity to see whether you will be as unhappy here as you were at Naples. I don’t know whether it is necessary to remind you of the fact that when you were in Newport last year you promised to meet me in Paris. So write and let me know when you will come. Mr. Merrin was with me about a week ago, but his business has called him back to London, and it is just possible that he will have to go to New York, in which case I shall remain here until he returns for me in the summer. I could not possibly think of crossing the Atlantic at this time of the year. Don’t forget to write and let me know when you can come. Don’t leave it too late.”

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When Arthur had finished this second letter he paused again in deep thought, meantime slowly tearing the paper into small bits which he mechanically scattered through the open port, watching them flutter into the water. “Well,” he said, finally, to himself

“ why not ? If Gertrude has slipped my cable, why should I not take a cruise to Paris ? ”

That there was danger in the errand ; that, despite the light and apparently careless nature of the invitation, it bore a significance ; that, while it might prove only a trivial matter of a few weeks' pleasure, it might prove the reverse ; he knew quite well. But the mood to do something reckless, something wicked, something irrevocable, was strong upon him. All through the long, lazy spring day, when there were few active duties aboard ship to occupy his mind, he debated the question, laying great stress upon the promise of which Mrs. Merrin had reminded him.

In accordance with the intention she had expressed in Newport the previous summer, this lady had arrived in Europe in the fall. Leaving her husband engrossed in business in London, she had joined some friends who were on their way to Rome. Stopping at Naples, the presence of several war vessels in the harbor offered an attraction sufficient to detain her party several weeks. Dances and receptions aboard ship and ashore followed in rapid succession, varied with parties and excursions of all sorts. But during this period of gayety Mrs. Merrin's expectations in regard to Arthur's attentions were by no means fulfilled. He chose to play the recluse, and provoked good-natured accusations of having left a sweetheart at home by the readiness with which he stood watch for any officer who wanted to go ashore. While he did not conspicuously avoid Mrs. Merrin, he certainly did not seek her presence. All of which, under the circumstances, was disappointing and mortifying to that lady. In refusing to attribute his discreet conduct to regard for her reputation she knew perfectly well, if he did not, that it was the memory of Gertrude Alden which kept him from other women's society, and nothing else. And the thought that the unrecognized power of this girl, thousands of miles away, was stronger than her physical presence, was not pleasant to a woman of Mrs. Merrin's character. So she incurred the trouble and danger of a desperate expedient to remove this counter attraction before again inviting Arthur to meet her. How well she succeeded, the announcement of Gertrude's engagement showed.

And yet Arthur, as he debated whether or not he should go to Paris to meet Mrs. Merrin, still had that letter of Gertrude's in his pocket ; he had not destroyed it as he had the other, and unsatisfactory though the reading was, he had read it several

times during the day. At nightfall he was still undecided. Tired of the interminable arguments of his conflicting feelings, he lit his pipe and leaning upon the bulwarks dismissed the matter from his mind, intending to settle it in the morning. Only as he lit his pipe, the one his father had given him, he remembered the major's humorous suggestion that he be not ashamed to go to it for advice, and he smiled at the wisdom of the conceit, for there was no doubting the nature of the advice given by this old veteran friend. And Arthur said to himself, "Poor father."

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"What are you looking at?" said Dudley, breaking in upon Arthur's meditations, and peering curiously over the side into the water at which Arthur had been gazing so intently.

"Nothing," replied Arthur, straightening himself up and knocking the ashes out of his pipe. "I was thinking."

"No," exclaimed Curley, incredulously. "What about? Or isn't it any of my business?"

"No," said Arthur, promptly, "it is not."

"Oh!" said Curley, "all right. I came here to do you a kindness, but if that is the way you are going to treat me—well, never mind."

"What kindness!" said Arthur, sceptically.

"Why, to let you go ashore with me to-night."

"Not much," said Arthur.

"Oh, yes, come ahead," urged Curley, "I'll take you to see my girl; she is ever so pretty."

"Pretty ugly," retorted Arthur.

"No, but really, this is a new one," protested Curley, laughing. "I say, I think you might go. Won't you?"

"What the deuce do you want to go ashore for, at any rate?" said Arthur.

"I don't want to go," replied Curley, "that is just it; I have been ordered to take the mail."

"To take the mail!" repeated Arthur. "To-night? What is that for?"

"Don't you know?" said Curley. "We have got orders to go to sea. The old man came off about an hour ago, and told Jackson to be ready to get under way at daylight. It is an infernal shame. We only got the anchor down the day before yesterday. I don't see how the girls will stand it."

"It is a pity about the girls," said Arthur. "Well," he added, with a long breath, "that settles it, anyway."

"Settles what?" said Curley.

"Why, I did not know whether to write my letters to-night or to-morrow," said Arthur.

"Well, you had better get at it right away, and bear a hand about it, too," said Curley. "The boat leaves at six bells."

Descending into the steerage, Arthur wrote a few hurried notes, and one was to Mrs. Merrin, explaining his inability to obtain a furlough at the present time on account of the ship's unexpected departure, that their destination was unknown, but that he would write again from the first port at which they stopped. This done, he was surprised at the feeling of relief which ensued. While every one else was growling at being deprived of their run on shore, Arthur alone was perfectly satisfied, even light-hearted, at the prospect. Once more he filled and lit the major's little black pipe, and as he did so he gave a little friendly laugh which no one but the pipe and he understood.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next morning the "Comet," under all plain sail, majestically breasted the dark blue waters of the Mediterranean, but whither bound no one but "the old man," the generic name for the captain, could tell. Once fairly at sea, life aboard ship settled down into the old, monotonous routine of duty. After leaving the Mediterranean and entering the Atlantic, a northerly course was shaped and fair days became the exception and dirty weather the rule. The regular hours ticked off by the stroke of the bell and the boatswain's pipe were varied only by an occasional call of "All hands shorten sail!" as some sudden storm bore down upon the ship. Unheralded squalls were frequent enough to make the duties of the officer of the deck no sinecure; and the orders to "Lay aft to the braces!" "Man the main clew garnets and bunt-lines!" or "Stand by the tops'l halyards!" were constantly on his tongue day and night. Sloppy decks, stiff, wet gear, and shiny, damp, oil-skin clothing, did not tend to enlivenment, and everything and everybody was moist, gloomy and disagreeable. When lights were set at nightfall, every one who was at liberty to do so turned in, one man because he had the mid-watch, and another because he had just come off watch. Darkness found all who were lucky enough to be off duty, asleep in their berths, dreaming, maybe, of dark Italian eyes, and low, soft voices, enchanting waltzes or jolly larks on shore; dreams constantly broken by the voice of the messenger boy as, lantern in hand, he aroused some unfortunate with a flash of his light and "Eight bells, sir! Your watch!" And as the awakened man grumblingly gropes his way on deck others who have been aroused by the call, sink back to slumber with a delightful sense of relief that it is not yet their fate to exchange a warm bed for the cold, wet, windy deck. The exquisite pleasure of having four more big hours to sleep! The sense of richness which such a possession bestows can scarcely be appreciated by the thankless, spendthrift landsman who sleeps his eight or

nine hours at a stretch without so much as a thought of the blessing he enjoys.

It was the close of a gloomy day. Four bells in the dog watch had just been struck when Arthur, dripping with moisture, came down into the steerage from off watch and called loudly for the steerage boy to bring him his supper. Going into his berth he divested himself of his wet waterproofs and then sat down to his solitary meal. Dudley, throwing aside the book he had been attempting to read by the dim light of a swinging lamp, said, "Hello, Arley! How are we heading?"

"Nor' east by nor'," replied that gentleman, not in the best of humor.

"Whereabouts are we, do you know?"

"No, nor nobody else, I fancy," said Arthur. "Off Ushant somewhere, dark as pitch, and a fog that is more like rain than anything else."

"A pleasant evening!" said Curley, cheerfully.

"You'll think so," retorted Arthur, "when you stand your watch."

"You wouldn't stand it for me, would you?" said Curley.

"No," said Arthur.

"I thought you wouldn't," said Curley, with an air of conviction. "I don't see why the old man don't steam out of this," he continued; "all our fresh meat and vegetables are gone."

"I should judge so from this supper," said Arthur, leaning back in his chair. "Did they find out what was the matter with the drinking water?"

"Yes," replied Curley. "They also found out what became of that monkey the men brought aboard at Naples, and that disappeared so mysteriously two or three days ago. Yes," he added, in answer to the look that Arthur gave him. "Poor little fellow! He was a very nice monkey."

The silence that naturally followed this information was broken presently by a hoarse bellowing, first on one side and then on the other, as the ship rolled.

"There go those infernal fog-horns," exclaimed Curley. "What is going on on deck?" he added, as another soaked individual made his way into the steerage.

"They are getting ready for a cast of the lead," was the reply. "One of the lookouts hailed a light, and they can't make out what it is. I think old Jones is looking for the Ushant

light, but it is so foggy you can't see the foremast from the quarter-deck."

"Jones has been in a regular stew to get an observation," said another of the party. "He hasn't had one for two days, and it is my belief he does not know exactly where we are."

"Don't you fool yourself," said Curley. "Jonesy will take a grain of sand from the deep sea lead and a couple of logarithms, and get as good latitude and longitude as you could from the sun."

"It sounds as though they were going to get up steam," said Arthur, rising from the table.

"Clever scheme," said Curley. "Hold on a minute, and I will go on deck with you," he continued, as Arthur put on his rubber coat.

The wind had died away and the ship under top-gallant sails, was laboring in the heavy sea, every now and then throwing the sails back against the masts with a jerk and a report like a battery in action. The water was shrouded in a dense, cold fog, from which every now and then as the ship careened, a monster of a billow reared its huge black head in startling proximity to the deck. As Arthur, followed by Dudley, reached the deck, a light puff of air rent the mist, and one of the lookouts, taking advantage of the opportunity, startled every one by crying, "Light, ho!"

"Where away?" came the quick response from the officer of the deck.

"Dead ahead, sir!" was the reply.

"Bear a hand with that lead, for'ard!" sang out the officer of the deck, and in a few moments the warning cry, as the lead was cast, echoed up in the fog monotonously, "*Watch, oh, watch!*" repeated with an eerie effect as each man dropped the line, chanting, "*Watch, oh, watch!*"

The lead marked sixty fathoms, and no bottom. The captain gave some direction to the officer of the deck and then went forward. Presently word was passed for the signal quartermaster, and in a few moments more a sudden blaze on the forecastle, as a blue light was touched off, rendered the scene as phantasmal as a nightmare. The pallid glare sifting through the fog, showed the figures of the men gathered on the forecastle, wavering and misty with faces like the dead; ghostly sailors on a ghostly ship; while the moaning of the fog-horns, rising to an unearthly scream as the vessel rolled with greater force, and the muffled strokes of the bell

ringing out at intervals, but deadened by the mist, made a fitting accompaniment to the weird, spectral scene. Then suddenly ship and men vanished as the light went out and dropped with a hiss on the wet deck.

Presently another puff of air, sufficient to again open the curtain of fog, was felt; then another, and a fair breeze came out on the quarter, gradually dispersing the mist. Instantly there followed the hail of the light dead ahead. The captain, standing on the forecastle, saw it at the same moment, but his keen eye detected what the lookouts had not seen, and short and sharp came the order: "*Down with your helm!*" and "*Down with your helm!*" was passed back along the deck to the quartermaster at the conn, who, answering "Helm's hard down, sir!" sheered the ship just in time. For almost directly under the bow lay a fishing smack, no light set, and every one aboard of her apparently asleep. Again came the order: "*Port! Steady! Let her go off!*" and another boat was lightly passed.

"We are right into a shoal of them," said the captain to the first lieutenant, standing near him. "I wonder how many of these fellows are run down in a year. *Port! port! steady!*" And so the ship was gradually manœuvred through the little fleet, which was soon left far astern, while the wind again died away and gave signs of shifting.

Arthur had gone aft on the quarter-deck and was standing leaning on the rail, thinking he had seen a flash light off to leeward, while Dudley, about to go below, paused for a moment in the lee gangway with the same idea. Meanwhile the captain had directed the officer of the deck to take in the mainsail, which was hanging loosely from the yard. The orders were given and the sheet cast off the cleat as the clew garnets were being led out. But at the moment a heavy flaw of wind from the quarter bellied out the immense sail. For an instant it was held by a snarl of the sheet, then with a mighty rush it flew out, and swinging its great blocks through the air like the lash of a whip, they struck Dudley, and despite his convulsive clutches at all within his reach, knocked him overboard! He was standing there one moment, and the next, without a cry, he was gone!

Instantly there was the shout of "*Man overboard!*" sending a thrill of vague terror to the heart of every one who heard, and then followed a blind rush over the wet decks through the darkness, as suddenly checked by the quick orders that rang out loud

and clear from the quarter-deck: "*Silence fore and aft! Let go the life buoys! Lay aft the life-boat's crew! EVERY MAN TO HIS STATION!*"

Scarcely a minute of time had elapsed, though it seemed an age, but in that minute, excepting on the quarter, silence and order usurped the place of confusion. Excepting on the quarter, where the men were being dashed aside by a powerful arm, and a large, dark figure sprang up and stood for a moment on the rail! Only for a moment, for some one grasped his collar and threw him in and down on the deck. It was the captain, and he said, "Pick yourself up, my fine fellow! One man has gone after him already, and if they two can't save themselves, I'll not lose more!"

The life-boat's crew meantime had sprung into their boat, the boat was lowered and detached, and dropping into the gulf of darkness and gleaming white spray, was almost instantly lost to sight. The yards were swung around, and the ship hove to on the starboard tack, the wind veering to the southward and coming out in fitful gusts. Men were stationed in the rigging to keep the buoys in sight, and there was nothing more to be done. Silence reigned on the ship. A hundred eager eyes peered across the backs of the huge black billows, constantly startled and deceived by what looked like a white face or tossing hand, but which proved only gleaming foam. The ship seemed all staring eyes, and the men grew nervous in their helplessness, in their inability to do anything more to save the lad drowning out there in the night.

And now a murmur, a whisper, passed through the ship, and it became known that two men were overboard. Some one had jumped after Mr. Dudley, the captain had said so. Who was it? Who is it? But no one knew, and certain old sailors shook their heads, and said, "Such a night as this, and in the Bay of Biscay! There's no use looking for them!" And others cursed them for croakers, and again strained their eyes over the waters. The captain walking up and down the quarter-deck with his hands behind him stopped and said to the officer of the deck standing on the bridge, "Mr. Dunn!"

"Sir" replied the officer of the deck.

"Do you know who it was that went after Mr. Dudley?"

"No, sir," replied the officer of the deck.

But the paymaster stepped forward, and said, "It was Mr. Arlingford, sir. He was standing by the quarter. He had just

spoken to me, telling me that he thought he had seen a light to leeward. When the cry was passed I saw him put his hand on the handle of the buoy and flash the port fire, then as soon as he had dropped the buoy he sprang on the rail and was overboard almost instantly."

And again the whisper and the murmur passed through the ship, and all the men knew who it was that had gone after Mr. Dudley.

"Too bad! Too bad!" muttered the captain to himself. "Mizzen rigging, there!"

"Sir!"

"Do you see the buoy lights?"

"I only see one, sir. That's the only one I have seen at all."

"Who let go that starboard buoy?" cried the captain, turning to the men on deck.

There was no answer.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in disgust, "you are a damned lubber, whoever you are. The man that's gone is worth a dozen of you."

"On deck, there!" came from the fore-top.

"Well," interrupted the captain sharply.

"I've lost the buoy, sir."

"Fore-t'gallant cross-trees, there! do you see that buoy?"

"No, sir. I've just lost it."

Silence is on the ship again, making audible the dashing of the waters and the first premonitory creakings and rumblings of the machinery. Then all hands are called to furl sail, and presently the "Comet" is steaming up against the wind in the direction the buoys are supposed to be. A conviction that they must be near the spot now—past it, some say—increases the uneasiness. No signs of the life-boat have been seen; and there are many who shake their heads gloomily, and despondency is transmitted from one to another until all are growing hopeless.

Suddenly "Light, ho!" came from the foretop-mast cross-trees, and at the same moment a blue light is seen burning low on the water on the port bow. It is the life-boat's signal. The course of the ship is altered, and presently the officer of the deck hails and is answered. A line is taken out forward and thrown to the tossing boat, while the men have to be ordered back, they crowd so eagerly to the side.

In a few moments Arthur appears on deck.

The captain, stopping in his walk, stands with his hands behind

him, waiting, as Arthur, muffled up in a pea-jacket, but with his teeth chattering, reports to him.

“Very well, Mr. Arlingford,” he says. “Is Mr. Dudley with you?”

All hands strain to catch the reply.

“Yes, sir ; but he was badly hurt, and can’t move.”

And it passes through the ship :—

“Saved ! Yes, both of them !”

And such a cheer for Arthur resounds up into the night as must have awakened even the French fishermen aboard the smacks.

While poor Curley is being carried down to his berth, the captain turns to Arthur, and says,—

“Go below, and turn in, sir. I will have something to say to you in the morning.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE light in the steerage was burning dimly, and all was still, when Arthur, awakening suddenly from a light sleep, started up from his bunk with a cry, and stared wildly around. The throbbing of the engines, the booming of the waves outside, the creaking of the cordage, and complaining of the timbers, and the loud breathing of some tired sleeper near at hand, familiar sounds that blended together seemed to make silence, soothed him, and partially restored his self-possession. He had been dreaming, dreaming that he had fallen overboard into the wild waste of black waters, while the ship sailed away, and left him; and that he was drowning, and yet could not drown; and grisly monsters of the deep came and mocked at him and threatened him until finally a ghastly thing, a dead body with Curley's pretty face all wet and disfigured, threw its arms about his neck, and was pulling him down, strangling him, when—he awoke. It was a horrible nightmare! And Arthur lifted his trembling hand to wipe away the perspiration that was trickling from his forehead. But a sharp pain pierced his arm, and forced an exclamation from his lips; and, looking down, he found his arm tightly bandaged from elbow to wrist. The sight and the pain dispelled the vapors of sleep, and brought him to himself.

It was not altogether a dream, then, after all. And, sinking back on his pillow, he stared at the swinging lamps while his disturbed imagination, which had re-enacted the scenes of the night with fantastical additions in his sleep, immediately busied itself with a repetition of the reality. Once more he stood poised on the rail, gazing down into the yawning, black gulf beneath; again he felt the sickening hesitancy and recoil from what seemed certain death; and then once more he made the fearful leap. Into the jaws of death, down, down, down, through solid black water, till his eyeballs started from their sockets, and his head seemed bursting, and he went mad with the ghastly horror of

going down and down, while with arms and legs and teeth and nails he fought the yielding, murderous water.

Back to the surface at last. Tossed hither and thither, pounded and bruised, and at times buried by the great descending mountains of water. At the moment all thought of saving the man—he did not know then who it was—was lost in the desperation of his own condition. With a thrill of terror he realized his helplessness in this black waste of waters, with death staring him in the face. Surely it could not be! It was a dream! It was not possible that he, Arthur Arlingford, was out there alone in the night, drowning like a rat! That others should die, should even die violent deaths, was commonplace, was part of every-day life; but that *he* should go out, be extinguished, and the world go on the same as ever,—no, it was not possible. And, as he arose on the back of a mighty billow, he stared wildly around for the ship. It was no longer in sight, it had left him; left him to die out there alone! And he shrieked for help, calling them cowards, and cursing them for their desertion. And a panic seized upon him, and he swam with desperate strength, and fought with reckless fury the descending masses of water, until, exhausted and sick with the sea brine he had swallowed, his strength failed him, and once more he sank beneath the surface.

The shock restored his reason; and, with a last effort, he arose to the air, and, turning upon his back, with all his skill he floated on the waves for a few moments, until he had gained his breath. Then for the first time from the top of a wave he saw the blue light of the buoy he had let fall. Oh, what joy there was in the sight of that spark!—that bit of man's handiwork which linked him to humanity. Instantly it restored his self-possession, his nerve, recalling as it did the reason why he had sprung overboard into this awful blackness. He had risked his life to save another, and he would save him! All thought of himself was instantly lost in that recollection and determination; and now with perfect calmness he exerted his remaining strength to reach the buoy. If the man was alive, he would be somewhere near it. Suddenly something rubbed his leg,—a thing that sent a thrill of horror through him, and curdled his blood as he paused to feel the next move of this unknown monster of the deep. Then swift as lightning the thought flashed into his mind,—“The man!”

Instantly he let himself sink, and, striking out desperately under the water, his hand came in contact with a human head. His

heart then gave a great leap, and, as he clutched the mass of hair, he involuntarily uttered a silent prayer to God, the Christian's God whom he had renounced, to any god, to any power that might exist, to help him in this extremity, as he was a god, not to judge him now in his great need, but only to help him save this life.

Once more on the surface, with the man's head above water, and Arthur gave thanks in his heart. The man was quiet, probably insensible; and, floating on his back, Arthur held the helpless head on his breast, waiting for a chance to grasp the buoy. It was near him now, with its long iron neck crowned with the fusepan in which the fuse was still burning. But it was no longer a life-buoy, it was a living thing. Quietly floating near him one moment, the next it made an eager dash toward him, as though to strike at him; and then, as he would turn to seize it, it flung itself back far out of his reach. It was a devil, a devil gone mad; bent upon stealing up to him only to beat out his brains! Eluding his failing grasp, it kept up its wild devil's dance about him, till his mind whirled and his senses failed, and the air and the water was filled with fire-crowned buoys pecking like vultures at his head.

Then had come another great wave, and the buoy was dashed against him with terrific force. He thought his arm was broken, but, with the convulsive strength of a drowning man, he fought with the iron monster, fought as fiercely, as furiously, as if it had been in truth a living thing. Gashed and bruised, he clung to it in its efforts to throw him off, until he had fixed his feet on the lower frame, and his arms holding the rescued man were wrapped around the standard. Gasping faintly for breath, he rested for a moment, and then, shifting his burden for a better hold, his eyes fell on the white face upturned to his. By the pale, flickering light he recognized Dudley! Curley, and dead! And Arthur wondered if he had indeed lost his mind, if he had gone crazy in this awful night.

Then followed a strain upon his physical strength that none but an athlete, an athlete imbued with desperate determination, could have endured. Was he holding a corpse? Even so he would save the poor body while life was left in him to hold it! Fiercely he swore that the waters should not have it without having him too! Oh, the dread waiting for rescue! with his sinews cracking and straining as he was blindly dashed here and there, now under water, now on top of a billow, where he feebly tried to cry out in his

despair to quicken the relief that he knew must finally come! The horrible waiting among those great, descending walls of shining black water, with its alternate hope and despair! The sinking of his heart as he fell in the trough of a wave where he could not be seen! The sickening fear that the boat had gone in the wrong direction, had given them up; the dread lest the fuse was spent each time it flickered in the spray! At last his fingers are slipping! His arms are relaxing! He can hold on no longer! God! Would the boat never reach them! A mist came before his eyes, a ringing in his ears, and he felt that the end had come! Then suddenly there was a shout and a flash of light, and Arthur knew no more.

The perspiration was starting out all over Arthur's body, his limbs trembled beneath the blankets, and his breath came fast, so vividly had his imagination re-enacted the scenes, and no sooner had he finished it than his excited fancy would fain have commenced at the beginning, and gone over it all again, so that he had to force his thoughts away from the subject by taking notice of the trivial articles about him. As he grew calm, however, the thought that he had done well, had acted as he would have had himself act, had saved the life of the boy he loved, and that the stress and dread was all passed, and only the satisfaction left, filled him gradually with a feeling of intense rest and gladness. He hugged himself in the comfort and safety of his warm berth as he listened luxuriously to the sound of humanity and its daily life, to the throbbing of the engines, the creaking of the timbers, the deep breathing of the sleeper, and the voices of the lookouts as at the end of the hour they passed the hail, and "All's well."

"Arthur!"

"What is it, Curley?"

"Are you asleep?"

"No: do you want anything? How do you feel?"

"Oh, I am all right," replied Dudley feebly.

After a moment's silence, he laughed and added,—"I say, wasn't the water awfully cold!"

"The young one is out of his head," thought Arthur.

"Curley," he said aloud, "shall I call the doctor? He said he wanted to be called when you woke up."

"No," said Dudley, "I don't want the *medico*. Come here a minute, can you?"

Arthur arose somewhat stiffly, and went and sat on the edge of Dudley's berth. The poor boy seemed to have been badly injured. He was unable to raise his head, which was swathed in bandages; and as he turned his white face toward him, Arthur was greatly moved at the pathetic change which the night's work had wrought.

"Here," said Dudley, "draw this blanket over you, you will take cold. Why, what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Arthur. "I got bruised a little with the buoy."

"I did not know you had been hurt. I am awfully sorry," and his voice faltered. "I suppose it is mean of me to make you turn out; but I could not stand it any longer. I have been lying awake for a long time, listening for you to move. I can't get up, or I would have gone to you."

"What is the matter?" said Arthur. "Are you feeling worse?"

"No, I am all right; but I wanted to tell you.—Don't you know, the first thing I thought of after I came up, was you? I knew that you would come after me." Dudley, in his eagerness, tried to raise himself to look at Arthur as he said this, but sank back with a groan.

"Oh, don't, Curley! Don't try to move!" implored Arthur. "Don't let us talk about it now. Wait till to-morrow."

"No, no," replied Dudley. "I must tell you now. I would have jumped after *you* if *you* had gone overboard," he continued, eagerly. "Though I can't swim, I would have done it just the same! You know that, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Arthur, "either one of us would do as much or more for the other; so this isn't worth talking about."

All of Dudley's assumed carelessness was gone. Weak and nervous, he made no attempt to restrain the tears that followed each other down his pale, bruised face. Holding Arthur's hand against his cheek with a woman's caress, he said,—“don't go away. Stay here with me a minute. The cursed water soaked all the back-bone out of me. Do you know if it had not been for that buoy I never should have got back? I got it as soon as I came to the surface. Whoever dropped it had a level head, and I held on to it like grim death. But I lost my grip after a while. That must have been when you found me. God! But it was awful!”

"Don't think about it, Curley," interrupted Arthur. "Try and go to sleep."

"Oh, I can't go to sleep, my head hurts me so. No, I don't want the *medico*! Stay here with me just a little while."

"I will," said Arthur, "if you promise me not to talk any more, but to try and go to sleep."

"All right. I will do anything you want me to. I always have. You know that, don't you? Just tell me you know that."

And the boy's great, brown eyes, hot and feverish, were lifted wistfully to his. Arthur began to feel alarmed.

"See here, young one," he said, in his old-time tone of authority, "you are making too much of a fuss over all this. I know you have always done what I wanted you to; and now I want you to belay all this talk, and go to sleep."

"All right. I will try. Only I begin falling overboard again. Don't go away."

"No, I won't," said Arthur. "But I want you to shut your eyes."

Holding Arthur's hand, Dudley obediently shut his eyes, and in a short time his labored breathing and nervous starts and mutterings told Arthur that he was slumbering. Arthur did not dare to release his hand, knowing how much this sleep must benefit him. He grew cramped, and his arm pained him as he sat there between waking and sleeping, and heard the bell strike the hours, until finally he was aroused by the entrance of the surgeon, who promptly ordered him off to bed.

The next morning Dudley was in a high fever, and delirious, and the doctor looked very grave. This gravity transmitted itself throughout the ship, and hushed each man's footsteps as he passed the improvised hospital on the gun-deck, where the lad lay in a swinging cot. Arthur was by his side most of the time, for the blow he had received on the arm disabled him from active duty. Meantime, the day after the adventure, the captain complimented him in orders on his action in jumping overboard after Dudley. Commenting on the coolness and presence of mind he had displayed in dropping the buoy, and the courage he had shown in risking his own life to save that of another, the captain said it was with satisfaction that he took this occasion to bring to the notice of the Department at Washington, not only this special act of heroism, but the high estimation in which Mr. Arlingford was held by all of his superior officers.

The day following, the "Comet" dropped her anchor inside the breakwater at Cherbourg, and that night Captain Topman sent for Arthur.

"Arlingford," he said, "the doctor and I have just been having a little consultation about Mr. Dudley. They tell me that the poor boy is pretty badly off, and we have come to the conclusion to send him ashore, where he can have perfect rest and quiet, which of course he cannot have aboard ship. I understand from them that he is liable to have trouble with his lungs, to which he was predisposed. In fact, he was always delicate. They think—and I agree with them—that as soon as he is sufficiently recovered from the complication of troubles caused by the blow he received and the shock of the accident, he had better leave the sea-coast and go inland, where it is warm and dry. Now, as you are disabled from active duty by the condition of your arm, I propose to give you both a sick leave, so that while you are recuperating you can look after Dudley. The probabilities are that before your furlough expires you will get orders from Washington, as it is nearly time for your class to be sent home for examination for promotion. I wish you good luck, sir," concluded the captain, "and, if I can ever be of any service to you, don't fail to call on me."

A few days afterward Arthur found himself standing at the windows of a bright, sunny apartment in the quaint old-world town of Cherbourg, watching the "Comet" steaming out of the harbor. Turning away at last, with a long-drawn breath, he settled himself in an easy chair and filling his pipe, gave himself over to the various thoughts and feelings to which this strange situation gave rise. Here he was, after his long and deeply considered determination not to go near Paris, when, apparently, chance had carried him bodily away from the temptation—here he was, placed within a few hours' ride of the city, free to go there whenever he would. Surely it was a queer trick that fate had played him.

CHAPTER XXI.

"OF course I understand your feeling about not wanting to leave your friend, although there are very few men who would be so exceedingly conscientious. I do not ask you to leave him. Bring him with you. Although I remember that he does not like me, I like him, and we will all take the best care of him. You have been in Cherbourg three weeks now, and Mr. Dudley has been up and out for nearly a week. How do I know? Well, never mind. I know lots of things. Cherbourg is no place for him, at any rate if he has trouble with his lungs. The cold, damp wind from the channel is enough to send him into consumption. I asked a friend of mine here, who is a famous doctor, all about it, and he said that Mr. Dudley would be much better off in Paris if he took good care of himself, and did not go out too much at night. So there is no reason at all why you should not come. You said, when I asked you at Newport, that you would come 'if you could,' and you know perfectly well that you can now. You have no idea what a hero you are here. The papers had long accounts of your '*devotion*,' of your '*acte heroique! magnifique!*' It was heroic too, and I am ever so proud of you.

.

"I did not know that you had relatives in Paris. The other night, when we were talking about you, a gentleman whom I have only recently met, a M. de Beaugarde, said that you were his cousin. His aunt, or great-aunt, had married your grandfather, I think he said. I did not get it very straight. He seemed surprised when I told him you were in Cherbourg, and said that he hoped you would come to Paris. He is really very nice and very wicked. In fact most of the gentlemen here are very nice—and wicked. You will have to be very careful when you arrive, and not get led astray. There is no occasion for you to be any nicer than you are."

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"Who is your letter from?" asked Dudley, as Arthur folded the closely written sheet, and replaced it in his pocket.

They were sitting in one of the public squares on a balmy spring day, when the trees were busily unfolding their buds into delicate leaves and the grass was getting thick and green, and the birds were chirping in the bushes, and all nature was glad. Gaudily dressed soldiers and white-capped nurses flirted in the alleys under the trees, while gayly clad children disported themselves like so many butterflies in the sunshine.

Arthur and Dudley, during the last week of the latter's convalescence, had become familiar figures in this pretty square. The children came and stared at them at first, stared at the big brown sailor-man who had jumped into the water after his friend, this other one with the white face, for the story soon became known in the idle gossip of the town. After a while, the little ones, grown bolder, would sit on Arthur's knee while he told them stories of that strange America where he came from; while Curley, whose knowledge of the language was decidedly limited, would recline indolently on a bench, and make running comments on Arthur's performances, audaciously criticising his accent, and correcting his pronunciation. It was a pretty group; and many a woman's glance rested with gentle interest on the pale cheeks and big brown eyes of the invalid, and the bronzed, bearded face of his companion, as they sat thus surrounded by children in the warm sunlight under the trees.

"Who is your letter from?" inquired Dudley.

Whereupon Arthur turned and looked at him with an assumption of surprise and rebuke.

"Oh, that is all very fine," said Curley, "but you know perfectly well that you ought not to receive any letters that you are not perfectly willing for me to read. Is not that so, 'Toinette?'" he added to a little five-year-old who stood leaning against him, playing with his watch-chain.

"What does he say?" said the child to Arthur.

"He is talking nonsense," replied Arthur, in French.

"Is he?" said 'Toinette, looking at Dudley, with sympathetic fellowship.

"It is from Paris, isn't it?" continued Dudley.

"Yes," said Arthur, "it is from Paris, if you are so anxious to know."

And then for the twentieth time in the last two days Dudley

exclaimed, "Let us go to Paris, Arley. I am all right now. You know the captain and the doctors and all the rest of them said that I ought not to stay here after I got well."

"Yes," said Arthur, "but they did not say anything about Paris. You would not behave yourself there; you would be down sick in a month."

"I would not either," retorted Curley belligerently. "I should like to know if I don't always behave myself everywhere. That is the trouble with me, I am too good."

At which Arthur grunted significantly.

"At any rate," said Curley, "we have got to go to Paris to get anywhere else; and there is no reason why we should not stay there for a few days till I get rested."

"You are not in a condition to travel," said Arthur.

"Perhaps you know more about it than the doctor does," retorted Curley.

"Did he say you were?"

"He said I should be in a day or two."

"Well, then, if he says so, I suppose we shall have to go."

"Of course," assented Curley. "Although," he added, "if you really don't want to go, we won't say anything more about it. I don't care so much as all that. Only I should think you would rather be in Paris than here."

"Oh, I don't mind," replied Arthur carelessly; "only I think it will be better for both of us to keep out of Paris."

"How discreet we are growing, all of a sudden!" said Curley.

But a few weeks later he remembered this reply of Arthur's when events gave it a meaning which at the time he had no idea of attaching to it.

That afternoon, Arthur wrote to his cousin, M. de Beaugarde, and asked him to obtain apartments for himself and Dudley in some quiet neighborhood. In a few days he received a cordial reply from De Beaugarde, saying that he had made all necessary arrangements, and would meet them at the railway station.

And so, not without regret for the gentle, peaceful pleasures of the old town, Arthur and Dudley set out for the modern Babylon.

It was a damp, gloomy evening when they arrived in Paris.

The myriad lights of the great city were blurred and hazy in the moisture which glistened upon the umbrellas of the pedestrians, the carriages, the pavement of the streets, and the houses, as though everything had been newly varnished. They found M. de

Beaugarde awaiting them with a big easy family carriage, into a corner of which he installed Dudley as deftly and gently as a woman, talking and laughing during the proceeding as though he had known them for years. In the scant opportunities which Arthur had for observing this newly found relative, he appeared to be about thirty-five years of age, with the easy manners of a man of the world, and the vivacity of a Frenchman. As they drove off he explained to Arthur, in his native tongue, that his mother had insisted on his bringing them to her house.

“But,” said he, shrugging his shoulders, “my dear mother does not understand. It would not please you to be in that great, empty house. You would rather be in apartments where you can go and come with perfect freedom. Is it not so? It is unnecessary to say that we would be very glad to have you at my mother’s house. Although I do not live there myself, understand, you are our cousin, and it is the same as your home to come to or not as you will. I tell you this because my good mother will ask you herself, and you must not let her wishes interfere with your convenience. Meantime I have procured apartments for you with the understanding that, if they please you not, very good,—you do not remain. Is that ‘all right,’ as you say in English?”

Arthur thanked his cousin heartily for his thoughtfulness, and saying that he feared he would inconvenience Madame la Comtesse by accepting her kind offer, he would keep the rooms.

“Inconvenience!” replied Beaugarde. “No! On the contrary, my mother will take it much to heart that you do not go to her home. But it is the pleasure of yourself and your friend that you must consult. *Eh, bien!* we have arrived.”

The house at which they stopped was in a quiet street opening off the Rue de Rivoli, and the rooms proved to be very pretty, comfortable apartments, precisely what Arthur desired. Beaugarde seemed gratified when Arthur expressed his satisfaction, and having seen them installed, and explained the arrangements he had made for their service, he took his leave with many protestations of his desire to make their visit to Paris a pleasant one.

The day following, Arthur paid a visit to his aunt. He found the Hotel de Beaugarde a melancholy building in the Faubourg St. Germain, fully sustaining by its appearance the gloomy character given it by his cousin. The Countess herself, however, was the opposite of her dwelling, being bright and cheerful to a degree which dimmed even the vivacity of her son. She was a little

woman with white hair and youthful black eyes which seemed to belong to some one else. She evidently prided herself on her knowledge of English, which in fact she spoke well, occasionally using words with a quaint and unusual fitness that produced pleasant surprises to those whose native tongue it was. She promptly took Arthur to task for not having made her house his home while in Paris.

"But I understand," she said, "it is so with young men that they like not to be what you say in English 'to the apron-string tied.' Am I not right?" And she smiled good-humoredly. "Ah," she continued, making Arthur sit by her side, "you are like your grandfather. I remember him well; though, to be sure, I was but a baby when he carried away my dear, sainted sister. He was very handsome, that grandfather of yours, tall, like you, with the grand air. And you are like your father, too. You are a true Arlingford. You have none of the features of our house, like your dear sister Kate. She is one of us. When your father brought her to me, three, four, five years ago,—eh, *mon Dieu!* is it five years ago? truly, yes,—I give you my word I thought it was my dear sister come back again. Come, you shall see for yourself."

And, taking Arthur into another room, she showed him a painting of a black-eyed, black-haired young woman, with the waist of her gown under her arms, and a bunch of curls on each side of her pretty face. In truth it did look like Miss Kate a-masquerading.

"That was your grandmother," said the countess. "And Kate, the pretty little one, she is her repetition, is Kate. And when she came from the Convent School to visit me of a Saturday, she would entreat me to be shown this picture, and would sit there on a chair, and hold her hands thus, as does the picture, and say, 'Now I am grandmamma.' How is she, that dear Kate? But you do not know. You have not seen her for a year. And that beautiful one, her friend, her cousin, what was her name? She came to the school with her. Ah, yes! Gertrude. But she was what you call the elf, the fairy. My son—he was enraptured with her. And she is to be married, your dear father tells me. Incredible! You know the fortunate gentleman, this Monsieur—Monsieur—"

"Yates?" said Arthur. "Yes, I know him, but not intimately."

"He is worthy of her? He will make her a good husband? Yes, without doubt," she added, as Arthur did not reply very promptly, while she straightway built a romance on this slight foundation, with the thought, "Ah, this poor boy, he loves the

charming Gertrude himself, perhaps." And then continuing aloud, she said, "You will meet her here?"

"Who, madame, Gertrude?"

"Yes, surely. You know that she is coming to Paris?"

"No, I did not," said Arthur, somewhat startled. "I had not heard of it."

"But I think so," said the countess. "Stop, I will send for your father's letter. He is very good, that dear major. He writes to me three or four times in the year. Here it is," she continued, as a maid, in reply to her summons, brought her the letter. "Yes, truly, Madame Arlingford, his sister-in-law, poor lady, suffers with a malady of the heart, and her physicians advise her to consult our learned doctor, M. Perault. She leaves for Paris in May. She will arrive the first of June, in three weeks, you see; and Gertrude accompanies her. Without doubt, mademoiselle will have her trousseau made here. It is the manner of young ladies in America, is it not so? And to think that your poor mother does not know that you are here. Ah, what a thing it is to have one's son a sailor, not to know, when one prays for the dear one at night, where he may be! But what a happy surprise it will be for your aunt and Gertrude to meet you in Paris! And you, you will be very glad to see them! Yes?" And the little lady smiled benignly in anticipation of Arthur's reply.

But he answered, "I am afraid that I shall not be here to meet them. I shall remain in Paris only a few days."

"Ah, but that is unfortunate!" exclaimed the countess; and thinking to herself, "Yes, without doubt, poor boy, he loves the little Gertrude, and fears to meet her," she took a pensive pleasure in the fancy, and refrained from urging him further.

"Officers in the navy are not their own masters," said Arthur, smiling, as he arose to take his leave. "Besides, I am afraid that too long a stay in Paris will not be good for my friend, Mr. Dudley. The doctors tell me he ought to go to the south of France or Italy."

"Mr. Dudley is fortunate in having you for a friend, my nephew," said the countess kindly. "Ah," she continued, holding up her forefinger at Arthur, "I know all about that affair of the rescue, and I shall write to your good father to-night, and tell him with what pride and pleasure I welcome his son to my house."

Altogether Arthur was very much pleased with his new-found relatives. His cousin was exceedingly amiable, courteous, and

attentive, and at the same time careful not to oppress him with hospitality. A thorough man of the world, he understood just what to do and what not to do in a matter of this sort. Apart from the kinship which existed, Arthur and his companion aroused M. de Beaugarde's interest, their arrival and subsequent acquaintance gave him what he himself would have called a new emotion. And this transient interest before long developed into friendship, the companionship, at first a social duty, becoming a matter of choice. Like many bachelor Parisians of good family and ample means, Beaugarde did not lead an irreproachable life, but he was too much of a gentleman to involve Arthur in pursuits which might be at variance with his tastes, or beyond his purse. His time he freely placed at his disposal, and in all the city there was probably no man more thoroughly conversant with every form and phase of amusement to be had within its boundaries. One trait which Beaugarde displayed, won Arthur's liking at the outset, and that was the tact and good taste he showed in recognizing Dudley's youth and inexperience, and the restraint he put upon himself to avoid any kind of pleasure liable to do him harm. In the exercise of this novel part of protector of ingenuous youth, M. de Beaugarde grew to be quite fond of his *protégé*, while Curley, having overcome his native shyness, was equally drawn to the sunny, good-humored Frenchman. Not that Curley acquiesced in Beaugarde's moral guardianship; on the contrary, as soon as their friendship was established, there was a constant warfare, in which broken English and shattered French, intermixed with *argot* and Marine-College slang, was freely interchanged. Curley, with an injured air, declared that Beaugarde would start out in the most mysterious way as though he was going to indulge in some awful wickedness, the very worst there was in Paris, and when he got him all excited, would end by showing him a picture gallery or cathedral. He had not come to Paris to see picture galleries or cathedrals! What had he come for? Beaugarde would ask innocently, whereat Curley would laugh and bluster to hide the blush that despite his self-control would come upon his fresh young face.

As for Arthur, it was not long before he was putting the same question to himself, though without a responsive blush. What had he come to Paris for? Whatever he came for, he very soon found himself engrossed in pursuits in which Dudley had no part. At the outset, he had fixed the limit of their stay at two weeks, but no reference was again made to this understanding. Even at

the time he had so spoken, he felt very little reliance upon this anchor he was planting to windward. There was only one point on which his mind was made up, and that was that Gertrude's arrival should be the signal for his departure. He had come to Paris in fulfilment of his promise to Mrs. Merrin. He would not remain to meet Gertrude.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE evening of the day after his arrival, Arthur, accompanied by his cousin Beaugarde, called upon Mrs. Merrin. She was occupying a handsome suite of rooms on the second floor of a large house in the Boulevard Haussmann. It was her reception evening, and the apartments were filled with people, men largely predominating. In fact, Mrs. Merrin's acquaintance was confined almost wholly to men. She had not been slow to avail herself of the advantages of Parisian taste in the business of the toilet. She was exquisitely dressed, and her naturally stylish figure had a finish in its costume that made it perfect.

"So," she said, giving Arthur both of her hands, as he made his bow before her, "you have come at last."

"Yes," he said, "I have come at last." At the very marked favor with which their hostess greeted her tall, handsome countryman, a dozen pairs of masculine eyes were turned upon Arthur, and some with no very friendly expression. Arthur saw that this woman was a queen in a certain way among these men, and he was not unimpressed by the favor with which she singled him out. As he accepted her favor, and let his eyes rest upon her handsome face, heightened slightly by art, and her faultless form so perfectly draped, a spark of fire long since all but extinguished in his breast flickered into life, a sort of wicked elation brightened his eyes, and darkened the color in his face, and impelled him to hold her hands for a moment and let his eyes meet hers; then calmly he looked around at her other male guests.

In the primeval days of our savage ancestry perhaps this glance would have been followed by a wielding of clubs. As it was it was followed by introductions. Mrs. Merrin smiled as Arthur relinquished her hand, and taking his arm presented him in turn to the occupants of the room. They were one and all men of the Paris world, titled idlers, rich seekers after pleasure, gentlemen whose constant presence in his wife's salon could scarcely have afforded unmitigated satisfaction to Mr. Merrin had he known

them intimately; intimately, for instance, as Beaugarde knew them. Mrs. Merrin insisted on introducing Arthur to every one, making some reference to his recent exploit on each occasion, heralding him as a lion. After the favorable impression she had made upon him by her personal appearance, this violence to the canons of good-breeding and refinement grated upon Arthur. It seemed to him as though she were displaying him before these men, displaying him as one of her possessions whose value she desired to impress upon them. It annoyed him to be so posed, and he resented the various civil things that were said in response to her praise. One of the gentlemen, a blonde man of thirty-seven or forty, with innumerable wrinkles about his eyes, and a puffiness under them, and a supercilious expression in them heightened, by the single glass he wore, a man likely to inspire an instinctive repugnance in an innocent woman's breast, made himself particularly obnoxious to Arthur by his manner.

"Comte de Carambole," said Mrs. Merrin, "I wish to present a friend of whom you have heard me speak. Mr. Arlingford, Comte de Carambole."

The two men bowed, while the count raising his glass with an air of surveying Arthur, not pronounced enough to be marked, but sufficient to make it felt, dropped his glass, and turned to Mrs. Merrin with a bow. It said politely in answer to her showman-like introduction, "Thanks,—it is quite interesting: where did you get it?" and she in her ignorance was provoked into trying to impress the count more thoroughly with this new acquisition to her train.

"Mr. Arlingford is the officer who jumped overboard in the Bay of Biscay, and rescued his friend. You must have read the account of it. The papers were full of his gallantry."

Arthur bit his lips with repressed anger, while the count again raised his glass, and looked at him. "I regret," he said, "that I have not heard of the incident. No doubt it was highly creditable." Then turning to Mrs. Merrin, he added, with a profound bow, "Any man would be glad of the opportunity to risk his life for such praise from the lips of Madame."

Whereupon Arthur turned away, while Mrs. Merrin, laying her hand on the count's arm, opened her eyes wide, and said, with childlike ingenuousness, "Would they really?" and then adding, "I believe you are flattering me," rejoined Arthur, and drew him away to put him through another ordeal. When he had been

introduced to most of them present, and said and heard the same things repeated a dozen or more times, Arthur's first fleeting sense of pleasurable excitement was replaced by weariness, and he soon made it convenient to take his departure.

"You will come and see me to-morrow," said Mrs. Merrin. "I have not had time to talk to you to-night. Say to-morrow about one. I shall be alone then."

"I don't think I shall be able to come to-morrow," he replied. "The Countess de Beaugarde expects me to be with her. You know I have several relatives here whom I must see."

An expression of dissatisfaction darkened Mrs. Merrin's face as she quickly answered, "Aren't you beginning to make excuses rather soon? I am not accustomed to having my invitations declined here, and I shall expect you to sacrifice your other engagements to come to see me when I ask you. I want you to come to-morrow, and I shall expect you. Good-night."

And Arthur was there at the hour designated. In a very little while after that, when appointments were made he ceased trying to evade them. "What's the odds," he said, "after all?" And soon he was as familiar a frequenter of that luxurious salon as even the Comte de Carambole himself. His cousin, Beaugarde, lightly congratulated him upon the favor with which he was regarded in the Boulevard Haussmann. Arthur, however, was not in a humor to receive such remarks complacently, and did not take the trouble to hide the fact that such allusions were distasteful. Whereat Beaugarde secretly shrugged his shoulders and wondered at these queer Americans. There was scarcely a man about town who would not give his little finger to be the good friend of Madame Merrin, and take special pains to let everybody know it too. For where was the advantage, the glory, of winning a woman's favor if you did not let everybody know what an irresistible fellow you were! And as for talking about the lady in question, was not her name on the lips of everyone, in the Bois, at the theatres, on the race-course? Was she not famous, this beautiful American, this divine "Cléopâtre"? If Arthur was going to frown every time he heard her name, he would have duels enough to keep him busy from now till the New Year. As for Beaugarde, himself, he was rather amused and flattered with his cousin's success with "La Merrin," the sensation of the season. He listened complacently to the comments of his friends on the irresistibility of that brave Mr. Arlingford, although he refrained after Arthur's

protest from repeating them. Only once did he refer to the matter again, and then it was to caution his cousin against the Comte de Carambole,

"Beware of him, *mon cher*, he is bad. He will do you a mischief if he can."

Arthur, borrowing Beaugarde's favorite gesture, shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "I am not afraid of him."

"Afraid? no," said Beaugarde. "I did not speak of fear. I only caution you."

Now it must not be supposed that Mrs. Merrin's career in Paris escaped unfavorable criticism among those of her own nationality, or that she herself was free from reproach. There were enough Americans in Paris, who, having learned its wickedness, made it their business to guard their newly arrived compatriots from the shocking experience; and if any such strangers should persist in gathering forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge for themselves they were pretty sure of incurring the condemnation of the American colony. In the beginning of her sojourn Mrs. Merrin had plenty of acquaintances all eager to tell her what she must not do, to point out to her that the freedom which was tolerated in America was liable to misconstruction in France, that Frenchmen would misinterpret that childlike, confiding, familiar manner of hers; that she must not rouge or powder, or wear such striking costumes, or receive indiscriminate attention, or do various other little things which she was used to doing, without placing herself in a false position. Whereupon Mrs. Merrin, innocently arching her brows, replied "Yes?" in a wondering tone, and proceeded to do one and all of these things, and many more, to the intense indignation of her countrywomen.

Some indeed warned Mr. Merrin of the course that his wife was taking, but unavailingly, for Mr. Merrin was too much engrossed in the London stock market to pay much attention to these missions. It was easier to ascribe such reports to envious gossip than to involve himself in a quarrel with his wife by noticing them seriously. He did, during the occasional visits he made to Paris, expostulate with her on her extravagance. But his expostulations resulted only in unpleasant scenes, and he found it easier to redouble his efforts to make money to meet these increased demands. In fact, he preferred the risks of the stock market to the risks of curtailing his wife's expensive habits. He argued that it was only for a few months, and meantime extended his ven-

tures, the management of which kept him in London, and so gave his wife not only money but opportunities as well. Perhaps Mrs. Merrin took good care not to make it too pleasant for him during his occasional visits. Certainly his last sojourn, which had occurred a week or so prior to Arthur's arrival, had not from all accounts been a cheerful one. From what Mrs. Merrin herself said, Arthur fancied that some of Mr. Merrin's speculations had proved unsatisfactory of late, and that his wife's bills which had greeted him on his arrival had been an unpleasant surprise, straitened as he was at the moment; that he had, in fact, lost his temper, and that the conjugal meeting had been a stormy one.

Mrs. Merrin talked very freely of these domestic affairs, notwithstanding Arthur's discouragement of such confidences. She played the part of a much abused wife, and expressed unbounded indignation at her husband's "cruelty" in trying to deny her the pleasures and amusements of life. "He makes so much fuss about my spending money," she exclaimed. "I don't spend half as much as some women here. Look at Madame Augerau and the Comtesse de Bruyeres. They spend ten times as much as I do, and I venture to say that their husbands never utter a word, much less come home and abuse them, yes, abuse them for it! I did not have one-half my bills sent in to him when he was here, yet the way he went on you would have thought I had spent a fortune. You have no idea what I have had to endure from that man, Arthur! He says the most dreadful things to me, and I wonder that I have put up with it as long as I have."

And sometimes in narrating the story of her wrongs Mrs. Merrin would become so imbued with the character of an injured wife that her eyes would flash and her cheeks flame, and she would throw herself into a veritable passion, thereby giving Arthur a very vivid conception of the scene which had actually taken place between herself and her husband. Her French friends rather encouraged her in this rôle, but to Arthur it was very distasteful, especially as he was expected to sympathize vigorously with her, a course which his honesty and sense of justice forbade, and he was no actor. All of her French friends were voluble enough in condoling with such a wronged wife, whenever they were the recipients of her confidences, and denouncing such a cruel husband. They would have gone through that performance or any other that suited her whim of the moment, with intense emotion, and

have forgotten it in the lighting of a cigarette. They satisfied her, these surface emotions, just as though they were real.

But where a Frenchman would lightly win her favor for the moment, and be rewarded with her sunniest smiles, Arthur, taking matters seriously, obeying his conscience would incur her resentment by his silence or openly expressed disapproval, oftentimes drawing down upon himself a storm of reproach. A dozen times a week would she quarrel with his behavior toward her, and yet she retained him by her side. It was this very characteristic which probably drew her to him. She felt the force of his manhood, and her weak nature was attracted by it. She craved his mastery, and if he had asserted his power she would have been satisfied to have been his slave, at least for a time. But he refused to assert his power, disclaimed the sceptre, and submitted rather to her tyranny, which followed as a matter of course. She drew him to her with all sorts of pretexts, having the underlying power of compulsion, and now having got him to Paris evinced a determination to keep him there.

II

CHAPTER XXIII.

How Mrs. Merrin obtained her influence over Arthur may be explained in a few words. It was a matter of three or four years ago, when, as far as worldly experience was concerned, Arthur was little more than a boy. On the other hand, Mrs. Merrin was a bright, pretty, young married woman, with much style and some worldly wisdom. Being a married woman there was more freedom of intercourse between herself and the opposite sex than was possible for the average young lady visitor at Carleton, to whom attention was speedily rumored as engagement. The society of such a woman, perhaps a little older than himself, if not in age certainly in knowledge of the world, has a charm for a young man; her acceptance of his attentions is a powerful form of flattery. Mrs. Merrin, becoming interested in the handsome, athletic, young midshipman, exercised that charm over Arthur. She liked him for his manliness, for his quaint, chivalrous ideas of women, while his ingenuousness and innocence amused her, it was so different from the knowing assurance of the men she met in society. She made a companion of him, went rowing with him, danced with him at the hops, and, in the confidence engendered by his ingenuousness and her worldliness, encouraged him as she would not and could not have done other men without serious deliberation.

As a natural consequence, Arthur fell in love with Mrs. Merrin, or believed that he did, which, in such cases, is pretty much the same thing. She at first treated his avowals lightly, laughingly, although it was no light or laughing matter with him. On the contrary, with the ideas of honor inculcated by his father, and which were still fresh and unmodified by contact with the world, he felt degraded by his passion for another man's wife, while at the same time he was so infatuated that despite his efforts he could not release himself. He was not aware that Mrs. Merrin would not let him release himself; that when he made the effort, she, with a word or a look, tightened his bonds. In the pretty

comedy she was playing she made him believe that it was he who was leading her astray.

But affairs of this sort, "flirtations," so called, whether indulged in for amusement, caprice, or passion, must either progress or retrograde; they cannot remain stationary. And so it was that this affair, beginning in caprice, went further than Mrs. Merrin intended, and involved her in consequences more serious than she contemplated. It happened one evening that she had made an appointment to take a walk with Arthur. He was to meet her after "taps," the signal for extinguishing lights as the Marine College, and as the midshipmen were supposed to retire at that hour, ten o'clock, the meeting was necessarily clandestine. It was not the first time, by any means, that Arthur had run the risk of secretly leaving his room at night on such an errand. Mrs. Merrin did not encourage him the less for the danger, it increased the romance. The risk she herself encountered did not impress her at the time, she was so confident of her power of controlling such an innocent, provincial affair. She forgot that innocent affairs, lacking the caution which guilty ones inspire, oftentimes suffer a more disastrous termination in the eyes of the world.

It was a glorious moonlight night on which the meeting in question took place, and at Arthur's urgent solicitation, Mrs. Merrin consented to go out on the bay in his sailboat. The profound stillness of the warm summer evening, unbroken save by the low tones of their voices and the "lapping" of the water, rendered sailing delightful. It was a night in which humanity seemed to have a part in nature, like the water, and the moonlight, and the soft wind. In such a night, heavy with life, was Puck and his kindred conceived, and on such a night do the wild crew love to ride down the breeze and scatter the barriers of civilization. Mankind once more becomes a child of nature, a savage, a faun, whatever ancient priest or modern poet chooses to term it, and goes a sailing through the air with his feelings at the helm, and that will-o'-the-wisp, Fancy, for a guiding star. Time has no place on such a night. And so it was, that, with a feeling of alarm, Mrs. Merrin suddenly became convinced that it must be very late. They were a long distance out, and the wind had died down. Arthur got out his oars, but to his dismay, found that the tide was against him. Inspired by his companion's distress, he plied his oars with all the strength and skill of which he was master, but the best he could do was sufficient to make only slow

headway against the tide. The affair was getting serious. Finally, abandoning the effort to return to the college sea wall, he determined to land in the lower part of the town itself, and procure a carriage or walk up to the navy yard. Having effected the landing, Mrs. Merrin preferred walking to the risk of attempting to get a carriage at that hour, the respectable old town having long since sunk into somnolence and silence, broken only by the barking of a dog as they hurried along the white, moonlit streets. Fearing the challenge of the sentry at the main gate, Arthur conducted his companion into the navy yard by a circuitous route known to himself. The bell struck three o'clock as they entered the grounds. Mrs. Merrin hurried silently along in the shadow of the buildings, her reproaches and complaints having gradually been overcome by alarm and fatigue. As they neared the residence at which she was visiting and Arthur was congratulating himself on the successful termination of the adventure, Mrs. Merrin suddenly stopped, and, letting her hands fall to her side with a gesture of despair, exclaimed, "How am I going to get in!"

"Why, surely they have left the door on the latch for you," said Arthur.

"No, no," cried Mrs. Merrin, "you don't understand; Mrs. Soane said she was tired and was going to bed early, and she gave me the key, and I left it in my room. They have talked about us so much lately," she continued, "and now to have this happen!" And, nervous and tired, she began to weep.

With a feeling that he would like to fight every man in the place, Arthur did his best to comfort and console her.

"Let us ring the bell," he said, "they won't know what time it is, and if they do, what does it matter? You can tell them just how we were detained, and there will be nothing thought of it."

"There will be something thought of it!" she replied petulantly. "But I suppose there is nothing else to be done."

So the next moment the bell rang noisily through the house. Again and again he sounded it, until Arthur feared that he would alarm the whole of the navy yard before he could arouse the inmates of the house.

"They are doing it on purpose!" sobbed Mrs. Merrin.

At last there was a responsive creak upon the stairs, the door was unbolted, and Arthur, with an unanswered "good-night," took

his departure, with a premonition of impending evil by no means in accordance with his own words of cheer.

The next morning he received a message from Mrs. Merrin urging him to come and see her as soon as possible. On complying with her request, Arthur found her pale and disturbed and her eyes red with weeping.

"I told you how it would be," she exclaimed, as he entered the room. "You have got me into a pretty trouble!"

Greatly concerned he urged her to explain, which, after sundry other reproaches, she did, by telling him that some one had seen their surreptitious entrance into the navy yard, and had told Mr. Soane, the husband of the friend with whom she was staying. It was he who had opened the door for her last night, and when at breakfast she made some laughing allusion to her having been out sailing and detained by the wind going down, her explanation was received in silence.

"That made me angry," continued Mrs. Merrin, "and I got up and left the table. I went to Mrs. Soane afterward, and asked her what they meant by behaving in that way. And then she told me what her husband had heard about our coming in from the direction of town in the early morning, and that he did not believe that I had been out sailing at all! And she told me all sorts of dreadful things that people have been saying about you and me," continued Mrs. Merrin, beginning to cry again, "and that her husband was very angry about what happened last night, and had written to Mr. Merrin, and was going to report you to the commandant for being out all night, and that will make it all public!" she cried, breaking down completely. "If Mr. Merrin hears of it he will kill me! I can't and I won't stay here any longer, and I don't know what to do or where to go! Oh, why was I such a fool?"

Arthur had listened to this agitated recital with a variety of emotions. Regret for the trouble in which he had involved this woman whom he loved predominated; the sight of her tears overwhelmed him with reproach. At the same time the sensation was not unmixed with pleasure. She was shedding those tears on his account, and the very cause of them drew him and her closer together in isolation from the rest of humanity. He felt the power of a dozen men to shield her from slight or insult, and when she had finished her story his mind was quickly made up.

"Will you go with me, Lilly?" he said. "Will you let me take

care of you? It seems selfish to ask you such a thing, for you would give up so much, and I so little. And I would not ask it except for what has happened. I will protect you and take care of you as though you were a sister until you can get a divorce from him, from this other man, and then, if you will have me for a husband, I will try to make you happy, and I know I can!"

She looked up at him through her tears as he rapidly gave utterance to this proposition, looked at him curiously, as though she did not quite understand whether he was in earnest. But there was no doubting his sincerity; he was pale, but quite calm, and evidently meant exactly what he said. When Mrs. Merrin realized this it seemed for a moment as though she was about to laugh, but suppressing the inclination, she said, "You foolish boy! Don't you know that anything of that sort is utterly out of the question?"

"Why?" said Arthur.

"Why, because it is," replied Mrs. Merrin. "No, I can't do that."

"Then what will you do?" said Arthur. "You have just said that you don't know what to do or where to go."

"Well, I don't," she answered gloomily, her thoughts reverting to her own position and the humiliation she had suffered that morning. Then, with a sudden outburst of temper, she exclaimed, "I will make that man beg my pardon for what he has said and done, the miserable, contemptible wretch! I will! I will telegraph to Mr. Merrin to come on and make him apologize before I leave this house!"

Arthur was too much surprised and puzzled at the inconsistency of this declaration to make any suggestion. It seemed so incompatible with her just expressed fear of her husband's anger, and the desperate extremity to which she had professed to be reduced. Furthermore, her wrathful use of epithets startled and shocked his refined ideas. This was not the speech of a gentle, dependent woman, but rather of an independent Amazon. Her readiness to fight her own battle bewildered him.

"I don't know, after all, but what telegraphing to Mr. Merrin would be the best thing I could do," continued Mrs. Merrin, after a moment's reflection. "He will get my message and come on before Mr. Soane's letter reaches him, and I can explain the matter my own way. But then," she added, looking at Arthur with new alarm, "Mrs. Soane told me that that husband of hers was going

to report you to the commandant for being out of your room, or something. That will spoil everything."

"You need not trouble yourself about that," said Arthur. "I will see that it goes no further."

"How?" said Mrs. Merrin.

"Very easily," he answered, evasively. "You need not give it another thought."

"But how?" she insisted, impatiently. "I want to know."

"Well," said Arthur, "I will see Mr. Soane, and if he refuses to withhold the report, I will resign."

"Will you?" she said, eagerly. "Will you do that?"

"Yes," said Arthur, with a vague feeling of disappointment that she had no thought for him in the matter. "There is nothing else for me to do under the circumstances. I certainly don't intend to permit your name to be talked about if anything I can do will prevent it."

"I suppose if you should resign that would end it, wouldn't it?" she asked.

"Certainly," replied Arthur.

"Oh, well," she said, "I hope you won't have to do that, of course." Then, with her chin upon her hands she lost herself in thought for a few minutes. But, apparently, the retrospect was reassuring, for starting to her feet, she exclaimed, "Oh, what a fool I have been to let myself get into such a scrape! If there had been any reason for it, it would not have been so bad, but to get into this trouble just for nothing!" And, with the fickleness of an April day, the tears again came into her eyes, and, leaning her arms on the mantel-piece she hid her face, and Arthur could see from the movements of her shoulders that she was sobbing. All his tenderness and manhood again came to the surface at the pretty, pathetic sight, and, going to her side, he said, "Don't cry, my darling, don't cry. I will do anything in the world that you want me to do. Only you won't let me help you, you won't accept my protection. What else can I do?"

"Oh, you can't do anything," she cried impatiently, raising her head and drying her eyes with her handkerchief. "There is nothing to be done except to telegraph Mr. Merrin to come. You had better go now, it won't do for you to stay too long; and don't come here again unless I send for you."

"Very well," replied Arthur, in a different voice. "I will attend to that matter of the report. Good-by."

The change in his voice attracted her attention. "I hope you won't have to resign," she said in a childlike, confidential tone, standing in front of him and playing with one of the brass buttons on his coat. "And it is very good of you to offer to take care of me," she continued, looking up into his face. "You are very kind and honorable, and there is not another man living I would trust myself with so quickly as with you. And if you can help me, I will send for you. You will come, won't you?"

"Will I?" he replied, passionately. "You know I will. If you ever want me, I give you my word of honor that I will come to you, no matter what happens."

"And, if Mr. Merrin should be very, very angry, and I have no one else to go to, will you take me?"

"You know I will," he replied, "only too gladly! Now, or at any time."

"Remember," she said, disengaging herself from his embrace, "that is a promise. Maybe some day I shall call upon you to keep it."

"I shall remember," he answered, and so took his departure, actually elated.

Arthur afterward had a long interview with Mr. Soane, which resulted in that gentleman's deciding to withhold the threatened report, rather than force Arthur to resign; a determination which he characterized as Quixotic, but which, at the same time, he saw plainly enough the young man fully intended to carry into execution. He contented himself with giving Arthur much good advice and a warning as to his future conduct in this particular. Mr. Merrin arrived in response to his wife's telegram, and as she afterward informed Arthur, espousing her side in the quarrel, carried her back to New York in triumph.

More or less gossip and some scandal ensued as the story leaked out, as such stories inevitably do, with sundry additions and embellishments; but after Mrs. Merrin's departure it was gradually forgotten. Arthur's prompt resentment of any allusion to this "affair," as evidenced by his quarrel with Hough in the smoking-room, helped to consign the matter to oblivion. And it was not long after Mrs. Merrin's departure, before his passion followed the same road. For the love that she inspired in him owed its existence to her presence. When she was absent there was nothing to keep it alive. Mrs. Merrin would not, however, permit Arthur to forget her. She was a woman with whom an

“affair” was a necessity. To be sure, in the circle in which she moved in New York, she found no dearth of these ready to her hand, but the selfish attentions of *blasé* men of the world were stale and wearisome, compared to the unselfish devotion of the young midshipman. Unaware of it, in the lavish abundance of his affection, she had grown to like him far more than she knew, and now that they were separated, she regretted him. She wrote to him more and more frequently, and if his replies were not as prompt or as fond as her fancy demanded, she reproached him. As time passed and freed him from his illusions, she grew more exacting. She reminded him of his promise, and, while exaggerating the effects of the trouble in which he had involved her, she magnified the seriousness of the bonds which held him to her. His sensitive honor was only too quick to respond to this appeal, and he acknowledged the extent of his obligations. His word had been given and he had no thought of evading the consequences. Mrs. Merrin at first understood this as little as she understood the chivalric vagaries of Lancelot, but she was not slow in learning the extent of her power and in availing herself of it to the utmost, in the furtherance of her caprice. It was very pleasant to control this strong man, this favorite of society, with an invisible thread; it gratified her pride as well as her affection. Her meeting with Arthur at the ball was the first since their separation. She had counted on that meeting to re-awaken in his breast his former ardent attachment. But, when she found him with Gertrude, she instinctively recognized in her a foe, an embodiment of all that was antagonistic to her peculiar influence over Arthur, and she promptly, almost insolently, asserted her authority to separate the two. At Newport, later on, Mrs. Merrin realized that Arthur’s allegiance had wasted away to the formal tie that held him. What had been but a capricious, fitful flame, being now fed by jealousy, pique, and passion denied, became an all-consuming fire. She chose to consider Gertrude as the sole cause of her discomfiture, and at Naples Arthur’s increased coldness and restraint irritated her to such a degree that her lawless fancy reached a climax, and she determined that, cost what it might, she would bring him to her feet once more. She comprehended the nature of the power that held him from her, and knew very well where to undermine it. How cunningly she reasoned was evidenced by the result. A few strokes of the pen, and long before she herself hoped for any result, she learned that Gertrude was engaged to be

married, and to Mr. Yates! She laughed to herself, again and again, at the quick growth of the seed she had planted, and the harvest it would yield. Then, writing to Arthur, she bade him come to Paris. Events had favored her, and he was here, by her side once more.

Now while martyrs, reformers, and a few other combative people, may live in daily antagonism to the life that surrounds them, ordinary mortals insensibly adapt themselves to their environments. A life of indulgence accustoms a man to look upon vice with composure, just as a life of warfare accustoms a man to regard bloodshed with indifference. Arthur understood, well enough, that Mrs. Merrin's continual assertion of her claim upon him, and the persistency with which she drew him to her, must end in a crisis of some sort, and, from the rapid pace at which they were going, that that crisis could not be far off. But he was careless, reckless. Their wild noisy life drowned the voice of sober reason and he would not pause to listen to it. There was no counter force to restrain him. The potent attraction exercised by Gertrude was transformed into a power that urged him on. Even his honor, strongest and keenest of his innate principles, he used as an argument for advancing, rather than receding. He told himself that he must observe the sanctity of his promise to Mrs. Merrin, no matter what the result; while, at the same time, he knew that there was inconsistency in this reasoning, for secretly, his sense of honor condemned him for the part he was playing. For instance, he resolutely refused to meet the husband of this woman, and when Mr. Merrin visited Paris, he abstained from going to the Boulevard Haussmann, that he might not have to act the hypocrite. He even carried this feeling so far as to refuse invitations to dine at the house. He would not break bread or eat salt at the table of the man whom he knew he was wronging. Yes, as his French acquaintances said, he was eccentric, this young American. The fact was that he had not been trained for this sort of work.

In every other form of amusement that was in vogue in Mrs. Merrin's set, Arthur took part, and not infrequently took the lead. As though the devil was helping him, he was wonderfully successful at the gaming table. As soon as he commenced to play, old hands would back his luck. He was young and fresh at the business, and bound to win, they said. And win he did, at a rate that surprised every one but himself. He did not care and took his

success as a matter of course. Had it not been for these winnings at the green table, he would not have been able to keep, for a day, his place in this choice circle which scattered money with a recklessness which always led to one result. Arthur was not surprised at Mr. Merrin's protest against his wife's extravagance; he only wondered how his business could stand the drain. Like all the rest, she did not seem to realize the value of money. With her to want a thing was to buy it, and she never paid for it unless compelled to; she had it charged to her husband. She gambled with avidity, and becoming excited, generally lost, but while she grew querulous and angry for the moment, she very quickly forgot her ill-luck. Then, to be sure, she did not always pay these "debts of honor." Arthur first noticed this little idiosyncrasy with astonishment; he even felt disgraced and ashamed for her. But, like everything else, in time he became used to it; though sometimes she stirred his indifference to angry protest.

On one occasion, when they were playing *écarte* at her own tables, Mrs. Merrin lost an unusually large sum to the Comte de Carambole. She insisted, with great gravity, on drawing forth a little mother-of-pearl writing desk and proceeding forthwith to give M. de Comte her check for the amount. Later in the evening when she wanted a light for her cigarette, the count ostentatiously folded this piece of paper into a taper, and, lighting it, handed it to her with a profound bow. Perhaps M. de Carambole knew that the paper had no value in the bank, and so cleverly made capital of it in this other market. But Arthur, an unobserved witness of this transaction, angrily speculated as to whether the count's generosity was confined solely to the cancelling of this debt. He knew that the gentleman was exceedingly rich, and it very soon became evident to him that this style of conducting her financial affairs was not uncommon with Mrs. Merrin, and that, furthermore, she was spending more money than Mr. Merrin or any other one man of his acquaintance could supply. Arthur afterward taxed her with receiving loans from her male friends, whereupon she, seeing that he deemed this an enormity, instantly, with a great show of indignation, denied his charge. Then he told her, very decidedly, that as long as he had money, she was to come to him when she needed it, and to no one else. He could not have told himself why he was so angry over this matter even had he questioned himself, which he never did in these days. As for Mrs. Merrin, she was very well pleased at be-

ing so lectured by Arthur, and while she secretly laughed at the idea of his being her banker, she carefully refrained from openly offending him again in this particular. She even went so far as to borrow small sums of money from him that he might be assured of her good faith. She never made any secret of her pecuniary embarrassments. "One is always embarrassed, in Paris," she said, with a shrug of her handsome shoulders. How deeply she was involved Arthur did not know. In fact, she, herself, did not know, except in a general way by exterior indications, such as the behavior of the shopkeepers, or the persistency of the bill collectors. As time passed, she complained more and more bitterly of her husband's parsimony, his cruelty and abuse, as she called it, and not infrequently threw out hints to Arthur of her intention to separate from him if he did not prove more complaisant. Sometimes, on these occasions, she recalled the trouble in which Arthur had involved her at the Marine College, and playfully asked him if he remembered how he had urged her to leave Mr. Merrin, and marry him.

"You do not care as much for me, now," she said, reproachfully. "But I may have to hold you to your promise yet. Who knows? Mr. Merrin has never been the same to me since that affair at Carleton. I think if I had not telegraphed to him, and got him to take me home before he received that letter, I should have had to accept your offer. I sometimes wish that I had, now."

"I am afraid," said Arthur, lightly, "that your bon-bon bill alone would finish me; I can't always expect to be in luck at the table."

"There would be no question of bon-bons, if I were your wife," she replied. "Why, for that matter, I could support myself. I did, once, before Mr. Merrin married me. Did you know that?"

Arthur remembered having heard long ago, in the gossip of Carleton, something of the sort, that Mrs. Merrin had been in the employ of a down-town dressmaker or milliner, in New York, when Merrin, who was a broker in Wall Street, first met her.

"I would not expect to live like this with you," she continued; "I would not want to. But, as long as Mr. Merrin has got money, I am going to enjoy myself. That is what I married him for."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MEANTIME the pleasant little apartments hired by Beaugarde for Arthur and Dudley saw but little of either of them. During the first few days, when Arthur commenced absenting himself, Dudley expostulated and protested vigorously at being left alone. But as this produced no effect other than good-humored retorts and rejoinders, Master Curley very naturally started out in quest of amusement on his own account. Beaugarde, who had taken a fancy to the lad as before narrated, was frequently his companion, but as frequently Dudley went off alone. The result was that in a few weeks he began to show the signs of his imprudence. He coughed at night, arose in the morning pale and tired, and altogether looked much worse than when he arrived in Paris. Perhaps no more striking illustration of the change effected in Arthur's nature by the last three weeks of dissipation, could be found than in this very matter. Abandoning himself to the fascination of the wild, reckless life he was leading, he banished from his mind not only all thought of himself and his future, but all claims upon himself, all duties and responsibilities. He who had been so careful to protect this young and delicate comrade, who had been so quick to guard against or detect an unfavorable symptom in his illness, failed now entirely to note the serious change in Dudley's condition, or even to be impressed with it when it was pointed out. The sense of responsibility in the matter annoyed him, and he dismissed the subject from his mind with the remark that "he, Curley, had better not stay in Paris any longer."

Beaugarde was much more solicitous. He remonstrated with Dudley on the way he exposed himself to the cold wind, his irregular habits, and general lack of prudence. But he might as well have expostulated with the night air which made the boy cough. Dudley declared that there was nothing the matter with him and offered to fight Beaugarde to prove it. He further declared, that if they thought he was going to stay shut up in that

room, while Arthur was off having a good time, they were very much mistaken. He was quite willing to leave Paris and go to the south of France, just as soon as Arthur was willing to go, and not before. The fact was, that Dudley had gathered enough from Beaugarde's conversation and Arthur's behavior, to form a pretty correct idea of the sort of life the latter was leading. Moreover, he was jealous and fearful of the influence of Mrs. Merrin. As he once remarked to Langdon, "Mrs. Merrin was the only woman he ever did hate," and, now that she had drawn Arthur away from him, and, as he believed, was leading him to the devil, his hatred was not abated. Dudley did not assume any high moral grounds, it was not in his nature. As he himself said, he liked to have a good time as well as any fellow. But this affair of Arthur's was a different and much more serious matter. He felt that the renewal of his association with Mrs. Merrin was fraught with danger, while the gambling and fast living which accompanied it was sure to end in disaster. Even Beaugarde himself no longer laughed and shrugged his shoulders, when mentioning Arthur's "success," and, if Beaugarde looked grave over the matter, it must be growing serious. More than once Dudley recalled Arthur's disinclination to come to Paris, and in the long hours of the night, when his cough kept him from sleeping, he would blame himself for being the cause of all this trouble, and wish that he might get sick enough to force Arthur to "let go his hold." He was determined, that if he died for it, he would not leave Paris without Arthur. One great obstacle in his path was Arthur's reticence. He had never mentioned Mrs. Merrin's name to him or to any one else, so far as he knew, and moreover, never spoke of his movements, latterly, and Curley would not force his confidence.

If he did not want to tell him, well, that was all right. He would not ask it. He knew Arthur well enough to know that even if he did ask him, nothing would be gained by it.

Nevertheless, he did do violence to his pride on one occasion, fruitlessly, as he anticipated. It was one evening, after they had been in the city about three weeks. Arthur having returned home rather earlier than usual, was sitting in the window, smoking his pipe in moody silence.

"The doctor says I ought to go south," said Dudley, "to Italy, or some of those countries. Let's go. What do you say to it?"

"What is the matter?" said Arthur, looking up. "Are you worse?"

"Oh, I'm well enough," responded Curley, "only they think I would be better off down there. Won't you go?"

"I can't," said Arthur, "but you will. You have no business to stay in this cursed place. You are looking paler than when you came here."

"Why can't you go?" replied Curley, in the belligerent tone it sometimes pleased him to assume. "When we were in Cherbourg you said you would not stay here more than a week or ten days, and it is three weeks to-day."

"I know it," said Arthur, "but it is different now. I can't go."

"Yes, you can," said Curley, in a contradictory voice, seating himself on the bed and hauling off a boot, preparatory to retiring for the night. "We could have lots of fun travelling around together, and I am sick of this place, and so are you: I have heard you say so. Why won't you go?"

"Because I can't, I tell you. There is no necessity for my going, but you certainly ought to go."

"Oh, thunder! I don't want to go alone," growled Curley. Then, having completed his preparations for going to bed in silence, he humorously inquired if he should put out the light. He did not want to go to sleep with anything like a coolness between himself and Arthur.

"You had better not put it out!" said the latter.

"Why," said Curley, swaggeringly. "What will you do?"

"I shall light it again," said Arthur.

"Oh!" said Curley.

Then, having disappeared in his bedroom, he presently called out, with a tone of being about to make an important remark, "O Arley."

"What is it?" said Arthur.

"Good-night."

"Good-night," said Arthur.

And that was the end of Curley's attempt at diplomacy.

As Arthur sat by the window until late in the night, he heard the boy in the next room coughing, hour after hour. It was a depressing sound, and Arthur made up his mind that Curley must leave Paris. At the same time, he had no thought of going with him. He knew that he ought to go, but his conscience, usually so sensitive where duty was involved, responded to this demand only

with dull irritation. Presently, he fell to wondering when and under what circumstances he himself would leave Paris. He knew that a change of some sort was not far distant. This life that he was following could not last much longer; this mad pursuit of pleasure with other men's money and another man's wife, must end, and in a way he did not care to contemplate.

CHAPTER XXV.

ARTHUR'S conviction that this mode of existence could not last much longer, that something, as he expressed it, "had got to break," was well founded.

One day, shortly after his conversation with Dudley, he received a message from Mrs. Merrin telling him she desired to see him without delay. He found her in a state of great excitement over a despatch she had just received from her husband. It seemed that her creditors, who had become more and more importunate of late, failing to receive any satisfaction from her, had placed their bills in the hands of a collector with the legal authority to demand an immediate settlement from Mr. Merrin. That gentleman, appalled by the enormity of the amount, had written an angry letter to his wife, demanding an explanation, and declaring that the payment of such a sum at the present moment would ruin him. Her reply was that of a woman, who, construing the marriage relation literally as a contract whereby the man clothes and feeds her and supplies her with money, in return for the possession of her body, deems herself defrauded by his refusal or inability to do either or all these things. Refusing any explanation, disdaining excuse or palliation, she wrote as the one who was suffering an injury, as the one who had the right to be angry and indignant. She taunted him with his poverty and ill success, and bitterly regretted the position into which he had misled her.

He answered with a despatch informing her that he was about to join her, and that she must be ready to leave Paris on his arrival, without a moment's delay.

"I will not do it!" she cried, as Arthur, having finished reading the message, handed it back to her. "I will not go with him! It was stupid enough when he had plenty of money. Now, if he is as poor as he says he is, I won't go with him. If I have got to be poor, I will, at least, be independent, and I won't leave Paris with him."

"But what will you do?" said Arthur.

"I don't know, and I don't care!" she answered violently. "Only I won't go with him."

"Do you think that Mr. Merrin will pay your debts?" said Arthur, by way of saying something, as one keeps moving on dangerous ground.

"I don't know," she repeated, sullenly. "He told me in his letter that he had been losing money lately and that he could not pay them. I don't know whether it is true or not. At any rate, he has no business to lose money. These wretched people here, these shopkeepers, have been worrying my soul out for the last month, threatening to seize my things. They are watching me all the time, and if Mr. Merrin expects to get away without paying them, he will have a nice time doing it. I won't run away like a thief—not with him, at any rate."

She paused for a few minutes, and as Arthur remained silent, she suddenly changed her defiant tone to one of pathos and humility, and said, "Do you know, Arthur, I wish I had gone with you, when you asked me at Carleton. I never really cared for Mr. Merrin, and I don't see why I did not do as you wanted me to." Then, as Arthur still made no reply, she came closer to him, and, laying her hands upon his shoulder, looked him in the eyes, and said, "You are the only one in the world I have to help me. I will never go back to Mr. Merrin, I have made up my mind to that. You promised me once, that if ever I should need you, you would come to me, and that, if I ever should make up my mind to leave Mr. Merrin, you would take me. Do you remember?"

"Yes," he said.

"Will you keep your promise?"

"I always keep my promise," he replied, without hesitation, though he grew a little pale and drew a long breath as he spoke.

It was a strange acceding to a strange proposal. She felt the coldness of his response and it angered her, although she would not resent it, or demand more at the moment than was granted. She tried to gloss it over with sentiment, and going close to his side, with a childlike, confiding manner, she said, "Will you really? Will you take me?"

"Yes," replied Arthur, but without increased warmth in his reply. "Fortunately, I have some money, and very few preparations to make, beyond resigning my commission."

"Oh, you need not worry about money," she said, impatiently, passing by his remark about resigning.

"When will Mr. Merrin be here?" he asked.

"To-morrow night," she replied, "and that is the night of the ball at Madame de Brouille's. But I am going just the same," she added, reflectively. Then, with sudden recollection, she continued, "That is one of the things I wanted to see you about." Remaining silent for a while, apparently in deep thought, she finally looked up as though arrived at a decision and said, "I want you to be there without fail. How shall I know you? What will you wear?"

"A domino, most probably," he answered.

"Yes, but what kind of a domino? However," she said, looking at her watch, "you can arrange all that to-morrow, and let me know without fail. Fix it so that I sha'n't have any difficulty in recognizing you—it may be very important. And now you must go, because I have an engagement."

Giving him her hand, she drew still closer to his side and said, "Would you be glad to have me for your wife, or would you be sorry?"

As she nestled against him, her head leaning upon his shoulder, her words awoke a new emotion in Arthur's breast. For the first time a woman gave herself over to him. The thought stirred his manhood, and the knowledge that it was a lawless compact, that the world's face would be averted from her, but added to his feeling of strength and power to uphold her in defiance of the world. At this time life seemed to hold forth but little promise to him, and he was in an aggressive, combative humor, ripe for a quarrel with the world. This woman upon his breast was at odds with her kind, and he would take sides with her and fight her battle; and with the resolve a sense of infinite power and a consequent tenderness for her filled his soul. Whatever else she was, she was a woman, and her very weakness and waywardness but appealed to his generosity and added to his self-confidence and strength. When he finally answered she could detect but little passion in his reply; he spoke rather as a strong man might speak to a capricious child whom he has raised in his arms. "I don't think I shall be sorry," he said. She wondered that there was so little warmth in his manner or tones, and was at a loss to understand it; it was different from her usual experience with men. but she detected the touch of tenderness, and was satisfied

for the moment. "Go, now," she said in a whisper. "Good-night."

As Arthur left the house, his brain confused, all his senses in a turmoil, a cab drove rapidly up to the sidewalk and stopped. He paused and looked back with a suspicious curiosity in every trifling event which his present condition engendered. The driver opened the carriage door and the Comte de Carambole alighted and passed rapidly up the steps. In an instant a novel sensation of jealous anger flamed up in Arthur's heart. Had this woman, who had given herself into his protection, sent for this man? He turned and was about to follow the count up the stairs, when as suddenly he checked himself. "It is a little too soon for that," he exclaimed. "But after this—" and a short laugh that was not pleasant, but very significant, finished the sentence.

Turning away again, he walked rapidly without heeding the direction he took, his brain busily at work trying to understand this strange position in which he found himself. He might as well have tried to analyze a drop of the Seine, by whose waters he finally paused, and learn from it the secret mysteries of its component parts, the mysteries with which vice and crime had impregnated it, secrets soaked out of the dead bodies of suicides and murdered men. Any one of his motives taken singly and held to the light could be made to appear like a drop of this Seine water, transparent and pure; but, restored to the turbid river of his mind, it took on the dark and threatening hue of the guilty stream.

At last a street guard, crossing the bridge, on the parapet of which he was leaning, stopped and eyed him suspiciously, whereupon Arthur aroused himself and went home, with the burden of his thoughts unlightened.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MENTALLY and physically worn out, Arthur ascended the staircase leading to his rooms. On the landing in front of his door he was startled by the appearance of his cousin, Beaugarde, standing with his finger on his lips, and making other gestures of silence.

"What is it?" exclaimed Arthur, prepared by the strange events through which he was passing, to hear something startling.

"Our friend is very sick," said Beaugarde, in a whisper. "S't!" he continued, as Arthur was about to enter the room, "he is asleep, and must not be disturbed."

"But why? What is the matter?" said Arthur impatiently.

"He has had the hemorrhage of the lungs," whispered Beaugarde, shaking his head.

"Is he in danger?" said Arthur.

"*Ma foi!* Yes, without doubt," answered Beaugarde, with a shrug of his shoulders, and a wave of his hand.

"But I don't understand," said Arthur, with an inclination to become angry with Beaugarde, with himself, with everybody. "I don't understand. What is it?"

"What is it?" replied Beaugarde, somewhat sternly. "Do I not tell you what it is? And more I will tell you: it is the fortunate circumstance that I was passing the house at the time. I perceived the light in his window, and said to myself that I would make an engagement for the country, to-morrow, and so came up the stairs! My faith! I thought he was dead, that poor child! He lay there so white, with the blood on his pillow!" And Beaugarde rolled a cigarette with a little shudder. "And he was all alone, my good friend, he was all alone. He might have died, and no one would have known! This should not be."

Arthur frowned at this rebuke, and a retort sprang to his lips, but he suppressed his anger, and remained silent, struggling with an increasing alarm and uncertainty.

"Has the doctor been here?" he finally asked.

"Yes," said Beaugarde, "he said he would return. I thought it was he when you arrived."

Another silence followed, and was broken presently by the voice of some one speaking to the porter, and then the doctor mounted the stairs, and was briefly introduced by Beaugarde to Arthur.

"Is my friend in any danger, monsieur?" said the latter.

"Danger? Yes," said the physician, "but how great I cannot at this moment say."

Just then Dudley's voice was heard calling weakly from the bedroom, "Arley!" And Arthur, followed by the doctor, was quickly at his side. Dudley was lying on the bed, looking very white, and with dark circles under his eyes. As Arthur entered, he turned his head, and, with a faint attempt at his usual light-hearted tone, he said, "Hello!"

"How do you feel, Curley?" asked Arthur, awed by his appearance.

"Bully!" replied the boy, with a feeble smile. "I am all right!"

"All ride, hey!" said the old doctor, with a cheery smile. "*C'est bien!*" Turning to Arthur, he continued, in French, "he says that he is better, is it not so? Undoubtedly the hemorrhage has relieved him. Tell him that he must not talk," he continued, quieting the lad by a gesture. "He must remain tranquil. Come, let us go into the other room. He is getting along very well, but he must not move nor talk."

Leading Arthur to the window in the front room, the old gentleman ignored his questions until he had gathered all the information possible about his patient, and especially of the sickness following his fall overboard, of which Beaugarde had told him somewhat. Then he informed Arthur that Dudley's condition was precarious, that both of his lungs were seriously affected, and that he might have another hemorrhage that would carry him off at any moment. On the other hand, he said, it was quite possible that Dudley might recover; but, to render this possible, the strictest vigilance and prudence must be observed.

"I see," concluded the doctor, elevating his brows, "that your friend is impatient of nursing. He is careless. If he does not feel a pain, he believes himself well. So everything will depend upon you, my dear sir. He is a child, and he must not be trusted alone. In the mean time, all that we can do is to build up his strength, and start him away from here. Paris is not the place for him. If you are not at liberty to remain with him," added the

doctor, as he prepared to accompany Beaugarde, "I will make arrangements to send you a nurse, for I do not think it wise to leave him by himself. Do you understand? I have kept our friend, M. le Comte, here all the evening for that reason. You will stay? Very good. But, remember, he is not to be left alone, and is to remain perfectly quiet."

Arthur, very grave and serious, declared that he would answer for it, and promptly quieting Curley's protest against the whole proceeding, made his arrangements to sit up through the rest of the night.

In its disturbed condition his mind foreboded evil, anticipated disaster, but he had had no thought of its falling here. He expected it to alight on his own shoulders, and was willing enough to take to himself any blows that Fortune might deal him; but he did not intend that they should strike an innocent victim. With perfect self-confidence he determined that Curley should get well, and he passed the night with every sense on the alert for the slightest change in his patient's condition. During this long, silent vigil his thoughts found plenty to occupy them in considering the possibilities of the next few days. Although there were many things of which he refused to think; of his moral obligations to society, outraged; of his own honorable career, broken and cast aside, and above all else the effect his crime would have on those who loved him. Of these things he desperately refused to think. And when the rumble of the market carts resounded in the early morning streets, and Paris, like a slothful monster, began to stir before fully awakening, Arthur's determination was still unshaken.

"It seems to me," his father had once said to him, "it seems to me that you don't appreciate that somewhat trite saying that life is a serious business. That you are in fact inclined to be careless, even reckless, of your prospects. Don't you think this is a weakness? I know that youth is apt to consider the future boundless and discount it with a royal disregard of the expense, but the evidence of real manhood is a fixed resolve, a steadfast purpose which refuses to be led aside by each temptation that appears in its onward path."

Which advice was excellent, but of as little avail as most advice is. One sigh from his father's breast, one tear from his mother's eye, would have done more to awaken Arthur's dormant better self, than all the moral principles and shrewd axioms ever formulated.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MORNING came at last, and with it the doctor. Pronouncing Dudley's condition to be no worse, he commended Arthur's care, and cautioned him to continue his watchfulness; declaring, that as long as the patient grew no worse, he might be said to be improving.

Later in the day Beaugarde appeared, accompanied, greatly to Arthur's surprise, by Langdon. This dark-complexioned disciple of modern indifferentism sauntered in as though he had been living next door, and greeting Arthur in a commonplace fashion, said, "How is Curley?"

"He is better," replied Arthur. "But what wind has blown you here?"

"My father had some business in London, so I came across with him. We came over on the same steamer as your aunt and cousin."

"The deuce you did!" said Arthur. "Where are they? in London?"

"No," said Langdon, "they are here. They are staying with the Countess de Beaugarde. That is the way I happened to find you. Your French cousin here showed me the way."

"Well, upon my word," said Arthur, "I think they might at least have let me know they were coming."

"They did not know you were here till yesterday, at least I don't think they did. This gentleman here spun them a long yarn about your devotion to your friend, and how you had not left his bedside for a week, so you could not be expected to meet them if you had known. It is all right. Is Curley really very sick?"

"Yes," said Arthur; "he has had a bad hemorrhage. He is asleep now."

"I won't disturb him," said Langdon. "By the way, that was a neat thing you did in jumping overboard after him. I happened to be in Washington at the time we got the news, and all your people were immensely pleased."

"How was the family?" said Arthur. "All well?"

"Yes," replied Langdon, "they are all looking very well, especially your sister. She and Miss Alden have made quite a sensation in society this winter. Of course you know about Miss Alden's engagement?"

Arthur nodded.

"He is a mighty lucky fellow," said Langdon. "It is surprising how men like that always do carry off the brightest and prettiest girls. She has not been looking very well lately, though I think this trip is doing her good."

"Well, I suppose I ought to go and call on them," said Arthur, rather unwillingly, his thoughts busy with the new plans he had been forming.

"Well, I suppose it would be the proper thing," said Langdon, with a smile. "Can't I stand your watch for you here?"

"Oh, thank you, no," said Arthur. "Beaugarde will do that."

That gentleman, who had withdrawn to a little distance during this conversation, which had been carried on in English, arose as he heard his name, and came forward with an inquiring, "*Comment?*"

"You will stay with the young one while I go and pay my respects to my aunt, won't you?" said Arthur.

"Why not?" replied Beaugarde. "As for me, I have had the honor to call upon madame, your aunt. Ah! she is divine!"

"Who?" said Arthur. "My aunt?"

Beaugarde shrugged his shoulders. "If you will," he said. "But it was of the younger lady that I spoke. *Mon Dieu!* What eyes! And what hair! Like the Madonna in the Louvre! Ah, she is divine! Pardon me if I rave of her. When she speaks it is like the music of the organ that my good mother plays in the twilight. It makes one wish that he was better." And Beaugarde made a comical face at the impossibility of such a change, so far as he was concerned.

"When will you go?" he continued.

"Some time this afternoon," said Arthur, "whenever it is convenient for you."

He was not anxious to make the visit. On the contrary, he would fain have shirked the duty altogether. Gertrude's coming at this time, disarranged his ideas. Having made up his mind to his sacrifice he disliked renewing former associations. He was even annoyed at Langdon's presence. The latter's ordinary

manner, assuming that life was flowing smoothly in its proper channels, when he, Arthur, was on the verge of a cataract, was irritating. The night's reflection and decision had left him with the feeling that he had cut loose all ties, that he had abandoned himself to fate; and he resented the necessity of renewing his former existence, as a half-drowned man is said to resent being brought back to life.

"How long will you be here, Duke?" Arthur asked, in a pause of the conversation.

"I don't know, a week or ten days, perhaps. It depends upon how long the governor is occupied in London. Then we are to do the continent. By the way, I met Merrin coming across the channel. He looks all broken up. I fancy from what he says he has been losing a good deal of money lately."

"Yes?" said Arthur, inquiringly, but with faint show of interest.

"I suppose you have met Mrs. Merrin since you have been here," continued Langdon, cutting the end of a cigar with nicety. "I see you allow smoking. They say she has spent a fortune this winter. We have been hearing all sorts of stories of the sensation she has been creating."

"Yes?" said Arthur, again. "I don't know, I am sure. I don't pay much attention to gossip, myself."

Langdon's face reddened a little at this, while Beaugarde gently rolled another cigarette in the pause that followed.

"In this case it is hardly what one would call 'gossip,'" said Langdon. "I am sorry for Merrin."

To which Arthur made no reply. Again the secret possibilities of the future rendered this condemnation distasteful, and it angered him. At the same time he felt that he must seem unreasonable and inhospitable. A movement in the invalid's room gave him a pretext for excusing himself. He presently reappeared, and, telling Langdon that Dudley would like to see him, he showed him into the room, and resumed his seat by the window in silence.

Beaugarde, taking up his hat, said, "Well, I have an appointment for which I am a little late. I thought I would bring your friend to you first."

"You are very kind," said Arthur.

"It is nothing," said Beaugarde. "What time shall I come to take care of our patient?"

"Any hour will suit me," said Arthur.

"Some time in the evening? Yes?"

"Yes," said Arthur.

"Very well, then." Putting his head in at the bedroom door, he asked Dudley how he was getting on; and making an engagement with Langdon for dinner, Beaugarde took his leave.

The warm summer afternoon, the low voices in the next room, and the long vigil of the past night, made Arthur drowsy, and, after sundry unsuccessful efforts to keep his pipe alight, he fell asleep.

Dudley, on discovering this fact through the half open door, explained to Langdon Arthur's sacrifice of his rest the night before, and persisted in talking in a whisper, so that Langdon soon made a noiseless departure. At the foot of the stairs he very nearly collided with a porter, who, in a noisy pair of boots, was about to ascend.

"Whom do you wish to see?" said Langdon, stopping him.

"M. Arlingford," replied the man, touching his cap. "I am to deliver this note."

"Give it to me," said Langdon. "M. Arlingford has been up all night with a sick friend, and is now asleep. I will see that he gets it."

The man hesitated. "There is no answer, is there?" said Langdon, impatiently.

"No, monsieur, no, but I was told to deliver it to M. Arlingford."

"But that is all right, I tell you," said Langdon, taking the note, and slipping a franc into the porter's hand. "He shall have it as soon as he wakes."

Returning upstairs, Langdon softly entered the front room, and, nodding to Dudley through the open door, motioned toward Arthur, and placed the note on the table.

Except for the dim light shed by a street lamp on the opposite side of the way, the room was dark when Arthur awoke. As he arose to light the gas, Dudley called out to him, "There is a note for you on the table; it came while you were asleep."

He found the note, and as he took it up and recognized the writing, his heart gave a throb: to-night was the night of the masquerade ball. In the distraction of Dudley's illness and his own sleepiness, he had completely forgotten it, and had failed to send word to Mrs. Merrin what his disguise was to be. Not only that,

but he had neglected making arrangements for some one to stay with Dudley during his absence. It was with a muttered oath that he tore open the note, as these thoughts flashed through his mind.

"Why do you not send me some word about to-night? M—— has arrived
Do not fail me. L."

"What time did this letter come?" asked Arthur.

"Oh, two or three hours ago," said Dudley.

"Why the devil didn't you wake me up?" demanded Arthur, impatiently.

"Because I did not want to," Dudley answered, amiably. "Besides I could not if I had. I tried to get up for a drink of water, and had to think better of it."

"You had no business to try," said Arthur, unreasonably, getting him the water. "It shows how much you are to be trusted. You might have brought on another hemorrhage." Whereat Dudley looked at him oddly.

Consulting his watch with great irritation, Arthur found it was after eight o'clock. Rapidly revolving the matter in his mind, he decided that the first thing to be done was to send a message to Mrs. Merrin, excusing his remissness. He would send and get a domino immediately. He could certainly procure a messenger from the *café* around the corner. The note might miscarry into the hands of the husband, but he must risk that. Then, suddenly, he remembered that he could not leave Dudley. How stupid he was not to have thought of all this before! But, stop! There was Beaugarde. He had promised to return for the purpose of permitting him to visit his aunt. That would do capitally. He would get him to remain.

"Beaugarde has not been here again, has he?" he asked.

"No," said Dudley. Then, noticing Arthur's perplexity, he said, "See here, it must be late. Go and get your dinner, and go wherever you want to. Don't bother about me."

"Poor old fellow," said Arthur, really thinking of him for the first time. "You must have been very tired of lying there in the dark all this time, and half starved, too."

"Oh, pshaw!" responded Dudley, cheerily, "I am all right; you go and get your dinner."

"I will order it sent up for us both," said Arthur. "You won't move, will you?"

"No," said Dudley. "I won't move—unless I want to."

Hastily writing a few lines to Mrs. Merrin, explaining as best he could his neglect, and describing his costume, he hurried to the restaurant, and succeeded in obtaining a messenger. The note despatched, he ordered dinner, and returning to his room, walked up and down in deep thought. Supposing that Beaugarde failed to come, what should he do? Beaugarde was late now, but he might have been unexpectedly detained somewhere; he would certainly come some time during the evening, even if only to explain. Satisfying himself for the moment with this prospect, he prepared Dudley's meal, and then having hurriedly finished his own dinner, he sat down by the window with his pipe, and waited.

It is trying enough for one to await a tardy arrival under any circumstances, but with so much depending upon the relief he expected, and the doubtfulness of its arriving at all, Arthur very soon found himself striding up and down the room again in a fever of anxiety. Ten o'clock came, and with it no Beaugarde. Surely Curley was well enough to be left alone for a few hours, and Arthur turned to ask him, when the certainty of what the unselfish reply would be, and the foolishness of consulting him after all the doctor's warning, made him hesitate. If he could only get a message to Beaugarde, or even to Langdon! Either one of them would be willing to help him out of his difficulty. But where to find them? At all events he would send around to Beaugarde's rooms and inquire of his servant. Looking in at Dudley and finding him asleep, Arthur put on his hat, and opened the door. As he did so, he heard some one ascending the stairs. "There's Beaugarde, now!" he said to himself, with intense satisfaction.

But, instead, it was that gentleman's valet bearing a note, which, he confessed with many humble apologies, had been given him to deliver several hours ago. In it, Beaugarde, with deep regret, remembered an engagement for the evening which would prevent him from coming to sit with Dudley. There were ladies in the case, otherwise it should not have interfered. He hoped that Arthur would not be inconvenienced especially, as he learned from M. Langdon that madame, Arthur's aunt, and the beautiful Mademoiselle Alden, would spend the evening out.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Arthur. "Everything seems to work against me."

"Monsieur?" said the valet, inquiringly.

"Do you know of any reliable person I can get to remain to-night with a sick gentleman?" said Arthur.

No, the valet did not know of any such person, and if he did, he was too anxious to get back to his wine and his game of dominoes to acknowledge it. Resource after resource suggested itself to Arthur's mind, until the absurd impotency of his position struck him forcibly. He stared helplessly at the man who had brought him the note, and the man solemnly regarded him in return. The idea that this fellow might stay with Dudley if he was well paid, occurred to Arthur; but the certainty of his passing the time at the nearest wine shop, as well as the impropriety of keeping Beaugarde's servant, extinguished the gleam of hope. Then, dismissing the man, Arthur grew rebellious. He must, he would go! It was shameful to think that now there was risk, danger perhaps, he should fail Mrs. Merrin in this appointment. It must be of urgent importance, else why should she lay such stress upon it. What would she think? What could she think, but that he was sneaking out of the position he had assumed, now that her husband had arrived, and that he was afraid? It was intolerable. The thought that she was perhaps at this moment with the Count de Carambole added fuel to his anger at being placed in such a predicament. He hated the man, and the thought of her perfect form in some one of her pretty costumes, moving in the waltz with him, while he was tied to this room, was not wanting to stimulate his mutinous anger.

Finally he determined that he would go, at all hazards! Dudley was asleep and would probably remain so until he returned. Surely there was no reason why he should not go out for a couple of hours. The doctor himself could not expect him to remain in the room day and night without some fresh air and exercise. He was silly and nervous to worry so much about it.

This resolution once taken, he proceeded rapidly with his toilet. When twelve o'clock struck, he stood in the middle of the room with his hat in his hand, and his overcoat on his arm, about to turn down the gas. But in the act, his mind, which, despite the apparently decisive action he was taking, had continued to busy itself with the various aspects of the subject all the time he was dressing, suggested, "What if Curley should have another hemorrhage while you are away, and no one here to help him? He would die. The doctor said that there was the danger. What if you should return to find him dead?" Then Arthur's heart failed

him and his resolution was shaken. He found himself engaged in an imaginary conversation with the doctor, trying to palliate his conduct in deserting his patient to go to a ball, and the doctor was holding him responsible for his friend's death. And he, he could not even tell why he had left him, because it involved a woman's name. And with Curley's dead face before him, and the world pointing a finger of scorn at him as the man who had let his friend die that he might dance, the perspiration started to his forehead and left him a prey to all his former indecision. Perhaps, after all, he could see Mrs. Merrin in the morning just as well. A few hours could make no difference. As soon as the doctor came he would ask him to send a professional nurse. He was a fool not to have done that in the first place. Beaugarde was certain to be at the ball, and he would tell Mrs. Merrin how he was situated.

So, with his resolution tossed like a shuttle-cock between the battledores of conscience and desire, Arthur finally found himself standing by Dudley's bedside with the vague idea of discerning from his face whether it would be safe to leave him.

The lad was lying on his side, with his delicate white hands clasped under his cheek. He was very pale, while the hollows in his temples were scarcely concealed by the damp clusters of his brown hair, and the long, dark lashes were lost in the darker shadows under his eyes. The evidences of great exhaustion were plain enough, now that the spirit which ordinarily disguised them was asleep. Despite the fact that Arthur had hardened his heart to everything that barred his headlong course, he was touched by the appearance which his young comrade presented. Always handsome, almost effeminately so, the boy's face, as he lay there asleep, had an added, spiritual beauty, but it was awfully suggestive of death. This was so impressive to the most casual glance, that Arthur, sitting down by his side, leaned over to listen to his breathing. He did not arise immediately; he was tired without knowing it, and nature took advantage of this rest. His thoughts escaped from the purpose to which they had been so long held, and drifted away. Yielding to the pleasant, dreamy feeling for a moment, his memory took him back to the old life when he and Curley had been at the Marine College together. What a long friendship was theirs, and how self-sacrificing and loyal to it the boy had been! Ever since that day, more than five years ago, when he, Arthur, had taken the part of the little fellow, and had

won that notable fight in his cause Curley's devotion had never wavered. It was so entire, so self-forgetful, it was like a woman's love. Then, with it all, how plucky he was, how frank and honest! Surely there never had been such bright, mischievous humor, such unfailing good-nature under the most trying circumstances, together with such utter disregard of himself and his own comfort and interests, as he had displayed. No wonder that every one was fond of him, and all these traits he had subordinated to his friendship for Arthur. His exceeding modesty, veiled by an assumption of boundless assurance, together with his great affection, made him hold all his own good qualities and achievements as nothing, compared to Arthur's mental endowments and feats of skill and strength. As incident after incident illustrating this, arose in Arthur's mind, he felt all his former great tenderness for the lad welling up once more into his heart. As he sat there and looked at the delicate white face bereft of its spirit by the hand of sleep, he thought, with sudden regret, how easily he might lose this friend, and with the thought, for the first time in his active life, he realized the beauty of his character, and how completely all that he had had to give had been given to him, and how carelessly he had treated the gift. Gertrude had appreciated Dudley the moment she had met him. Somehow, Curley always reminded him of Gertrude. They looked enough alike to be brother and sister. He had once overheard Gertrude say to him, "I wish you were my brother."

Farther and farther Arthur's thoughts drifted back, until finally he became entirely lost to his surroundings.

The stroke of a distant bell sounded solemnly on the night air. He started, and looked at his watch. It was one o'clock. Instantly the present, like the waters of the Red Sea, rushed over the narrow causeway of his memory, and, separating him from the Past, left him struggling in the waves of the moment.

It was very late, but there was yet time to go. He must decide instantly. His brain whirled and his nerves were strung to a painful tension. For a moment he stood wavering, with his eyes fixed on Dudley's white face. Then suddenly breaking the silence of the room with an oath at his entanglement, he threw aside his overcoat and hat, and sat down by the open window. He would go around to see Mrs. Merrin the first thing in the morning; but as for to-night—he would stay with the boy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE day was just breaking when Arthur was aroused from a heavy slumber by Dudley's voice.

"What's the matter, Curley?" he asked. "Do you want me?"

"There is somebody knocking at the door," said Dudley. As Arthur listened, the low summons was repeated. Slipping on his clothes, he went into the front room and opened the door. A man was standing in the twilight of the entry. In answer to Arthur's demand, he came forward, saying, "It is I, Langdon. Hush," he continued, "I did not want to wake Curley. Can I speak to you a moment?"

"Certainly," said Arthur, in some surprise. "Come in. Curley is awake."

Drawing up the blind, and letting in the gray dawn, Arthur saw that Langdon had on his evening costume under his overcoat, and that he had evidently not been to bed that night. He looked very grave, and at the same time seemed somewhat relieved at sight of Arthur.

"What can I do for you, Duke?" said Arthur, looking curiously at him, and wondering whether he was indebted to champagne for this unusual visit.

"Well," said Langdon, as though in reply to Arthur's thoughts, and not without a certain embarrassment, "this is rather an early hour to rouse you out, but the fact of the matter is there has been the deuce to pay at Merrin's house, and I thought may be you might be of use."

"Why," exclaimed Arthur, somewhat startled. "What is the matter?"

"Merrin's wife has left him," said Langdon, "and the poor fellow is all broke up; and he asked me if I would not bring him around to see you, knowing that I was a friend of yours."

As Langdon paused and looked anxiously at him, Arthur said slowly, emphasizing each word, "You say that Mrs. Merrin has left her husband?"

Langdon nodded.

Taken thoroughly by surprise, Arthur was silent for a moment, busy with the thoughts which this news aroused. Then suddenly it flashed across his mind, "She has gone, and will send for me to meet her!" and he instantly put himself on his guard.

"I don't quite understand," he said. "Why does Mr. Merrin desire to see me? What have I got to do with it? Not that I have any objection to meeting him."

"Well," said Langdon, with some constraint, "it is just this way, as far as I can learn. Merrin has seen very little of his wife lately. She has been spending her time here in Paris while he has been busy in London, consequently nearly all her acquaintances are Frenchmen, whom he does not know. You are the only one, in fact, whom he feels that he can call on for assistance. He came to my rooms at the hotel just after I had got home, in great trouble, and told me about it. It seems that he and his wife had gone to the masquerade ball at Madame de Brouille's. He did not want to go, because he is in a good deal of anxiety about money matters, but she insisted on it. After supper some one took her away to dance, and he could not find her again. Finally he went home, thinking it possible that she might have returned. But she was not there; and not only that, but her maid was gone, and all her clothes and jewelry. So then he went back to Madame de Brouille's; but nearly every one had left, and his wife was not there. From what he told me, I imagine that he and his wife had had some words on his arrival in Paris, and that he had reason to suspect she might leave him. He has lost nearly all his money lately, and now that his wife has left him he has gone all to pieces, and is not fit to be trusted alone. I went around to the house with him and questioned the porter, and found sure enough that Mrs. Merrin had sent away a couple of trunks during the last week. I took the liberty of sending a note to your cousin, M. de Beaugarde, thinking he could probably help us more than any one. Then Merrin suggested that you might be able to advise him, and so I brought him around here to see you. He is waiting for us in the *café* around the corner. You don't mind seeing him, do you?"

"Certainly not," replied Arthur.

Langdon's narrative did not veil the fact from him that Mr. Merrin suspected him of being the partner of his wife's flight, and that it was principally to discover whether or not he was at home that he had paid him this visit. Nor was Arthur surprised at

this. The scandal that had coupled his and Mrs. Merrin's name together at the Marine College had been revived among the Americans in Paris during the last month; and there were, no doubt, many lips eager to convey the gossip to Mr. Merrin's ears and so fasten his suspicions on Arthur. At the same time, his first idea, that Mrs. Merrin had planned her departure beforehand with the intention of sending for him, was strengthened by Langdon's story. With this in view, it afforded him a grim satisfaction to meet the husband before proceeding to meet the wife. It suited his humor better than running away without confronting him.

"If you will wait," he said quietly, "I will dress myself and be with you in a moment."

Going into the other room he answered Dudley's inquiries by saying that Langdon had an American friend who had got himself into a little trouble. "He wants me to help him out," said Arthur. "I am only going as far as the restaurant, and will be back in five minutes." Then rejoining Langdon almost immediately he said, "I am ready."

There was a pitilessness in Arthur's manner which rather disturbed Langdon's new-born confidence that he was in no wise connected with the business in hand, and it was with a certain amount of uneasiness that he brought about this meeting between his two friends.

Arriving at the *café* he led the way through the front room, where a frowsy, unwashed waiter was mopping up the floor, then through a rear entry, where they ascended a staircase leading to some private apartments on the second floor. Asking Arthur to wait for a minute on the landing, Langdon entered one of these rooms. Arthur heard the low tones of his voice in earnest conversation, and the emphatic replies of the occupant of the room. Finally, an agreement seemed to have been reached, for the voices ceased, and Langdon, reappearing, said, "All right, Arlingford, come in."

Although Arthur had never been introduced to Mr. Merrin, he knew him by sight, and had no difficulty in recognizing the blonde, stoutly-built man of about thirty-five, who, pale and haggard from the night's adventures, now confronted him. The moment he entered the room, Mr. Merrin's eyes fixed themselves eagerly on his face. He paid little attention to Langdon's ceremonious introduction beyond bowing his head slightly, but continued to gaze at

Arthur in such a way as would have soon aroused his resentment had not Langdon come to the rescue.

"I have told Mr. Arlingford what has happened," he said, "and he has been kind enough to accompany me here."

Mr. Merrin nervously wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and then said, rapidly, "I am much obliged I am sure. I thought perhaps you could tell me something about my wife."

"I cannot," said Arthur, coldly. "I did not know that she had left Paris until Mr. Langdon informed me of it a moment ago."

"You don't know where she is?"

"No," said Arthur, "I do not."

"You don't know where she has gone to?"

"I've just told you, no."

"You lie, damn you!" exclaimed Mr. Merrin, suddenly abandoning his self-restraint. "You do know! If it was not for you, she never would have left me!" Then hurling a bit of crumpled paper at Arthur's feet, he cried, "There's the note that you sent her! Deny it if you can! But I'll fix you! I'll get even with you!" and with the words he put his hand to his hip pocket and drew a pistol.

Before he could cock it, however, Langdon, who had stood just behind him, sprang forward and clasping him around the body held his arms to his sides, at the same time exclaiming, "Merrin! What did you tell me? Drop that pistol!"

"Let me go, Langdon!" shouted Mr. Merrin, furiously. "Damn you, let me go!"

"I will, if you drop that pistol."

"Never, by God! I'll kill him!"

Then ensued a writhing and straining between the two men as they struggled together, their efforts broken by short breaths and disjointed oaths.

It was all so sudden that despite Arthur's preparation he was taken by surprise. Nevertheless, he did not move a muscle. Nor did he make any effort to interfere.

Once, when the combatants upset a table, bearing a water carafe and glasses with a crash, some one from below came running up to the room, whereupon Arthur locked the door, and put his back against it. Finally Langdon, who was no match physically for the elder man, in sore distress gasped out angrily, "Why don't you help me, Arlingford? Help me take the pistol!"

"No, I won't!" said Arthur shortly. "Let him have his pistol. I am not afraid of him!"

With one supreme effort, Mr. Merrin freed himself, and, panting for breath, he drew his arm across his dripping forehead, then, cocking the pistol, he raised it above his head.

"Langdon!" cried Arthur, very pale, but all his temper up, "I call you to witness that I came here at your request to see this man, and that I am unarmed! I don't blame you, but I believe that the damned coward got me here deliberately to murder me. By God! I don't wonder that his wife left him!"

At these words, hurled at him with bitter contempt, Mr. Merrin slowly brought his arm down, and stared stupidly at Arthur. The unexpected taunt seemed to have struck home. He drew a long, sobbing breath, and said, "No, I don't want to murder you. Go, arm yourself! But be quick. Do you hear!"

Meantime, Langdon, with his dark face aflame, his dress coat torn, his collar hanging loose about his neck, and his whole appearance bearing evidence of the fierceness of the struggle he had made, maintained his place between the two, and when Mr. Merrin lowered his arm he suddenly wrested the pistol from his grasp.

"Now!" he exclaimed, "I have a word to say about all this!" Addressing Mr. Merrin he continued, nodding toward Arthur, "He came here at my request, as he says, and you, after promising me that there should be no violence, drew a pistol upon him. You would have killed him for all I know! It was a cowardly thing to do! And what is more, I tell you that you have not acted honestly toward me in this matter! Do you understand? I hold myself responsible for his safety here. If there is going to be any shooting, I'll have the first hand in it, or I'll know the reason why!"

At this unexpected turn of affairs, Mr. Merrin stared in a dazed way, first at one and then at the other. The intense excitement which had sustained him through this interview with the man he believed to have wronged him was being replaced by exhaustion. When he found himself suddenly disarmed and upbraided by his only friend, he was completely unmanned. Dropping into a chair, he exclaimed. "That's right! I am down, and hav'n't a friend in the world! Go ahead, in God's name, and do as you please! Shoot me! I wish you would!" Burying his face in his arms on the back of the chair, his broad shoulders shook convulsively, and a sob broke the silence of the room.

Arthur and Langdon looked at each other, and while the former was still angry and excited from the danger he had been in, he began to experience a feeling of remorse at the sight of that broad back shaken by emotion.

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and Langdon, who was standing near, unlocked it, and opening it a little way, asked what was wanted.

"A gentleman desires to see monsieur," said the waiter, handing in a card.

"Ask him please to come up," said Langdon. And then in a low tone to Arthur he added, "It is your cousin, M. de Beaugarde."

Going over to where Mr. Merrin sat, Langdon laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said, "Merrin, M. de Beaugarde is coming up here and he may have something to tell us. Come, old man, brace up."

Mr. Merrin raised his head, and with tumbled hair and blood-shot eyes, looked at Langdon. Then, as Beaugarde's step was heard on the stair, he arose, and going to the window, stood with his back to the room. Langdon, righting the table and arranging his own dress, opened the door for the visitor. As Beaugarde entered, he glanced rapidly at the occupants of the room, and nodding to Arthur, he said to Langdon in French, "Can I see you alone?"

Langdon in reply stepped into the entry, and the two held a murmured conference for a moment, at the end of which Langdon returned alone.

"Merrin," he said, "Mr. Beaugarde has found out that Mrs. Merrin left on the midnight train for Dieppe."

"But, by the eternal God *he* shall never join her!" said Merrin, sullenly, as he looked at Arthur.

"I tell you, Merrin, that you are all wrong," said Langdon. "I have told you all along that Arlingford had nothing to do with the matter, and I was right. Mrs. Merrin did not go alone."

"Who went with her, then?" cried Mr. Merrin, fiercely. "Quick! Who is the man?"

And Arthur turned and looked at Langdon with sudden wonder.

"Mr. Beaugarde says that his name is De Carambole, the Count de Carambole."

"The devil!" exclaimed Arthur, under his breath.

Mr. Merrin looked at Langdon confusedly for a moment, and finally said, "Yes? I have heard of him." Then with an evident effort he began arranging his disordered dress. Finally picking up his hat from the floor, he turned to Arthur, and said, "Mr. Arlingford, it seems that I was wrong. I beg your pardon for my suspicions and for the words I used a moment ago. That note misled me. Langdon," he continued, turning toward that gentleman, "I need not tell you that I am much obliged to you for all that you have done. I should like to have you thank the gentleman who was just here, this Mr. Beaugarde, for the trouble he has taken, if you will. Gentleman, I wish you both good-morning."

With that, he turned and left the room.

"You had better go with him," said Arthur, nodding toward the door. "He is not fit to go alone."

"I intended to," said Langdon. Then holding out his hand to Arthur, he said, "I am sorry for what has happened. I had no idea of his doing anything of that sort."

"Of course," said Arthur. "That's all right. You had better not let him get away by himself."

He was strongly solicitous about Mr. Merrin, now.

Then, as Langdon left the room, Arthur slowly returned to his own apartments like a man walking in a dream. His thoughts and feelings were in such chaos he could make nothing of them. But two emotions there were which seemed to predominate: one was sympathy and anxiety for the husband, the other was anger and indignation against this villain who had eloped with the wife.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ARTHUR'S indignant condemnation of the man who had committed the crime which he himself was about to perpetrate, was honest in its way. Each man sees his own misdeeds clothed in the pretty garments of his own temptations, while the world sees them in their repulsive nakedness. Arthur was now a spectator of his own crime. In his sight there was nothing pleasing or honorable about De Carambole's action. There was nothing to palliate it: it was simply damnable. It was none the less damnable that he had taken his (Arthur's) place. For, ignore it as he would, although he did not love the woman, a certain fierce jealousy came cropping up in his breast. A man's vanity is the first thing that is hurt in such "love affairs."

As he thought the matter over Arthur still believed that Mrs. Merrin had really intended that he should be the partner of her flight. Each incident, from the day that she insisted on his coming to Paris until now, seemed to indicate that. Probably he was right. Without doubt she loved him in a certain way, and threw herself on the protection of the Comte de Carambole at the last moment only, when Arthur failed her. The count had been an ardent suitor, was wealthy, and had watched his opportunity. Mrs. Merrin had made up her mind to leave her husband. She had married him for position and money; she had never borne him any affection, while the free, dissipated life of this winter in Paris, full of careless indulgence and the unlimited admiration of many men, made the idea of returning to his side, in the commonplace rôle of a poor man's wife, intolerable. The fact, afterward developed, that she had sent away several of her trunks before her husband's arrival, indicated the deliberateness of her purpose. It also explained to a certain extent her encouragement of the Comte de Carambole. Should Arthur fail her, the count would be necessary,—indispensable, in fact. Arthur had failed her,—unwittingly, to be sure, through not understanding her intentions,—and, as a consequence, the count became the principal figure of

one of the most sensational scandals in which he had ever been involved, which was saying not a little. Why Mrs. Merrin had not reposed more confidence in Arthur was best known to herself. Perhaps she did not place much reliance in the power of the promise which bound him, and trusted rather to the power of her own charms heightened by the accessories of the ball. Or perhaps she herself had not decided until the last moment, between her fancy for Arthur and the count's wealth. Either of which hypotheses would explain her otherwise inexplicable anxiety that Arthur should attend this ball. As it was, she had made him feel that she attached unusual importance to this engagement, and he was sufficiently impressed to make a desperate effort not to fail her. Had he gone to that ball, he probably never would have returned. And now, as he looked back and saw the combination of trifling circumstances that had resulted in detaining him, he was astonished. It seemed as though the hand of Fate had reached down, and, ignoring all his troubled reasoning and labored conclusions, had set him aside, like a little child, out of harm's way. Was he thankful? He acknowledged to himself that he ought to be. And yet he rather resented this interference with his own lordly will. He rather resented being thwarted in his determination to go to the devil after he had made up his mind to it. Then, too, he was very angry with De Carambole. He felt as though the man had actually wronged him. He wondered whether Merrin would hunt him down, or let him go. If he were Merrin, he would—

But at this point the incongruity of his assuming to mete out justice to the delinquents struck him. If he were Merrin, would not he be equally justified in "hunting down" Arthur Arlingford? Because an accident had thrown him aside just as he was about to consummate his schemes, was he the one to sit in judgment on the man who had consummated them? The thought made Arthur feel very much like the thing he most hated,—a hypocrite. He arose with an impatient exclamation, and walked to and fro. As he walked, he began again to think over the events of the past hour,—Merrin's fierce accusation and desperate attempt to kill him as the real seducer of his wife; his grief and despair, apology and farewell, as he set forth alone in his search for the man who had dishonored him. Somehow the whole scene, as it re-enacted itself in Arthur's mind, impressed him differently from what it had during its actual performance. As he thought of it now, he grew

disturbed. He began to feel glad that he was where he was, and not on that train speeding toward Dieppe. The recollection of Merrin striving and struggling with Langdon in his effort to kill him, Arthur, caused the perspiration to start out on his forehead, and that was more than it had done at the time. He wondered at his own coolness. He must have been very angry, and it certainly was a cowardly attack, which even the circumstances of the case did not warrant. He was glad that Merrin had made it, however; it helped to equalize matters between them. Then, as he thought of the words he had hurled at Mr. Merrin in his indignation, and the taunt which had stayed his hand, Arthur laughed. It was a forced laugh, and was an expression of relief rather than merriment. He was glad to be permitted to laugh at all, and so he laughed. And it certainly was an absurd thing to say to a man under such circumstances. It was rather cruel, too, to taunt him with his misfortune. It seemed like an ungentlemanly thing to do, even to save his life. He wished that he had apologized to Merrin for it. Poor fellow! how completely broken down he had been! And the recollection of that bowed head and that broad back shaken by sobs added a very eloquent moral to the story of Arthur's past month. Yes, he was glad that it had turned out as it had. He would certainly have kept his promise to Mrs. Merrin, and have abandoned all at her command. If he had had any idea of what her plans were, he should never have failed her, he told himself. He believed that he had acted fairly and honorably by her. But, under the circumstances, he was glad that it had turned out as it had. It was a wretched business at any rate, and he was well rid of it. He only wished that, when Mr. Merrin had apologized to him for his suspicions, he had told him the truth.

Lighting his pipe,—the major's pipe,—Arthur seated himself in the window, and sent a cloud of fragrant smoke floating out on the morning air. "How thankful the father would be if he knew!" he thought to himself. Then the converse of this proposition occurred to him. Now that he saw the pain, the grief, the disgrace, the tragedy, which had followed on the heels of the act he had meditated,—now that he saw the outrage as other people saw it,—he was startled, dismayed. What would have been the result to his family had he been permitted to elope with Mr. Merrin's wife, he now scarcely cared to think. After all, had he been right in his view of the matter? Had not honor pointed the

other way? Had not the Devil gotten into him, and twisted and warped his judgment and sentiments so as to urge him on? Perhaps. In truth, he felt very much at this moment as though he had been delivered of a devil. A strange, unaccustomed sense of elation filled his breast. The mists that for the past two months had obscured his home life cleared away. He thought of his family, of his friends in Washington; thought of them pleasantly, and wished that he could see them. He wished that Curley would wake up, so that he might talk to him. He felt almost as though he had been away, and was prepared to indulge in that honest American habit of shaking hands with everybody he met. There was a sense of freedom about it,—a freedom to look any man in the face without suspicion; a freedom to enjoy the sunshine that came pouring in at the window without a thought other than that of keeping it out of his eyes; a freedom to enjoy the homely sights and sounds of every-day life without attaching to them any evil significance. He was no longer pursuing pleasure, or rather, pleasure was no longer pursuing him: he had escaped, and was free.

Beaugarde came in later in the day. He had little to relate beyond the already-known fact that De Carambole had accompanied Mrs. Merrin in her flight, and that they had gone to Dieppe, presumably to take the steamer for Ostend.

Beaugarde entered into elaborate details of his action in the matter, narrating how, on receiving Langdon's note, he had sent his valet to make inquiries.

"He is a detective, that fellow of mine," he declared. "For all his smooth face and his innocent air, I do not doubt that he can tell me more of my little affairs than I know myself. So I send him to make the discreet inquiries. For, do you see, I did not wish to have the scandal known. But, my faith! it is in everybody's mouth. No doubt it pleases M. le Comte to have it public. People will say, '*Mon Dieu!* have you heard? M. de Carambole has run away with the divine *Cléopâtre*, the beautiful American. Ah! he is a terrible fellow, that De Carambole.' So the whole town talks of it."

"Have you seen anything more of Mr. Merrin or Langdon?" asked Arthur.

"No," said Beaugarde. "But M. Merrin—he will be wise to do nothing. De Carambole is a duelist. Having eloped with the

wife, he will be only too well pleased to have the sensation of a meeting with the husband."

"I have no doubt he will be accommodated," said Arthur.

Beaugarde shrugged his shoulders.

"Your friend will make nothing," he said. "The lady declares her preference for another, and she is gone. What would you? Let him go home and procure the divorce, as you have it in your country. When M. le Comte is tired of his bargain, he will return to Paris, and the lady—"

Here Beaugarde blew a little cloud of cigarette smoke from his lips, and elevated his shoulders.

This summary disposal of Mrs. Merrin nettled Arthur; but, before his displeasure could shape itself in words, his cousin, who was evidently pleasantly excited by the great sensation in which he was a figure, and stimulated thereby to be loquacious, continued,

"I am only glad that it is not you who play the Don Juan, my cousin. When our good friend Langdon sent me the note last night, I greatly feared that it might be. And, my faith; so did he. It is I who tell you. He was well pleased to find you here this morning."

Here Beaugarde paused, evidently curious to know the secret of the angry disorder he had witnessed on joining them at the *café*, and expecting Arthur to proceed with his share of the story. But Arthur was in no humor to talk of the affair. He half shut his eyes, and, blowing a thin ribbon of smoke from his lips, said, in an inquiring but indifferent tone, "Yes?"

"My faith! yes," replied Beaugarde. "And he is not the only one either. They say at the club—"

"My dear cousin, they say so many things at the club," interrupted Arthur. "It doesn't make much difference, does it?"

Beaugarde, shrugging his shoulders, replied, "That is true," and accepting the hint, changed the subject. "How is our little friend?" he said.

"He is much better," said Arthur. "The doctor was here a while ago, and said that I need not stand guard any longer than to-day."

"Ah!" exclaimed Beaugarde, "that reminds me. I owe you a thousand apologies for my stupidity last night. You received my note? I had totally forgotten an engagement; and, as I found from your aunt that she would not be at home in the even-

ing, I knew that you would not care to make your visit. So, you see, I did not come. You will pardon me?"

"Why, certainly," said Arthur. "It made no difference."

As he made this conventional reply, the tremendous difference that it had made impressed him very forcibly.

"I told madame, your aunt, of your intentions," said Beaugarde, "and of my negligence; and she told me to say to you that she will be happy to receive your visit to-day. I will come and stay with Dudley at any hour you like."

"Thanks," said Arthur, "it is not necessary; he is so much better. Much obliged just the same."

He did not want to make that visit to-day. He did not want to meet Gertrude just yet. He could not tell why, only he shrank from it. No doubt she was too much occupied with preparations for her marriage to Mr. Yates, to notice his delay in calling. Besides, he intended to remain at home this day. He wanted to be accessible in case some unexpected development of this affair of Merrin's should demand his presence. And, in any event, he was anxious to hear from Langdon, to learn what had become of Mr. Merrin.

But Langdon did not make his appearance that day nor the next, and it was not until a week had elapsed that Arthur learned from his lips what the sequel of the matter was.

Langdon's story was brief. After leaving the *café* where that stormy, early-morning interview had taken place, he was unable to find Merrin. Going to the Boulevard Haussmann, he learned that the officers of the law were in possession, Mrs. Merrin's flight having so soon become known to her numerous creditors. Later in the day, Merrin appeared. He became furious at seeing his wife's apartments in the possession of the officer of the law, and used some violent language toward that official; but, fortunately, as it was in English, it provoked no other reply than sundry protesting waves of the hand and shrugs of the shoulder.

Merrin was not pleased at seeing Langdon again, and at first was cold and uncommunicative. He gradually gathered, however, from what the distraught man let fall, that he had occupied himself in purchasing a ticket for Dieppe, and another pistol to replace the one Langdon had taken from him. Finally getting him away to his own rooms at the hotel, Langdon talked and argued with him on the folly of pursuing the runaway couple. Taking much the same ground that Beaugarde had adopted,

Langdon pointed out the difficulties of such a pursuit; and even if he did succeed in finding the fugitives, it would be only to kill or be killed by this *roué* whom he had never seen; that he would not bring back his wife even if he could; that she was not worthy of his further consideration; and much more to the same purpose. Merrin still persisted, however, and Langdon went with him to Dieppe. Here with some difficulty, they learned that the couple had departed for Ostend, leaving their ultimate destination only to be guessed at.

Langdon renewed his arguments; and, finally impressing upon Merrin the necessity of at least trying to get his money affairs into some sort of shape before he attempted to do anything more, he induced him to return to London.

Here Langdon succeeded in getting his friend's thoughts temporarily withdrawn from brooding over his wrongs, and saw him gradually become interested in his financial affairs. Langdon lent him money to help him out in some of his more promising speculations, and finally left him calm and self-possessed.

"Strangely enough," concluded Langdon, "he had a marvellous streak of luck in one of his old stock deals, and realized quite a sum of money just before I left. What he will do eventually I don't know. I have done all that I or anybody else can; that is, tided him over the worst of it. I rather think that, now he has cooled down a little, he is beginning to look at the matter in its proper light, and that he will simply get a divorce, and that will be the end of it."

And Arthur, with a curious, dual feeling of being the guilty partner of Mrs. Merrin's flight, and at the same time the disinterested friend of her husband, replied mechanically,—

"Yes, I suppose that will be the end of it."

CHAPTER XXX.

NOT far from the house in which Arthur and Dudley had apartments, there is a modest, clean, bright little street, or rather, court, for it is no thoroughfare; a street that impresses one with the idea that all who live in the queer old houses which inclose it must be happy. A frank, honest street it is, that knows no guile; a street where children's voices and laughter awaken the cheery old echoes from the moment that the first early rays of the morning sun light up its nooks and crannies, until they lingeringly bid it good-night; a street completely separated from the noise and glare, gilt and dirt, fashion and folly of the town; an innocent, unsophisticated village lane hidden in the crowd of hardened, depraved city thoroughfares. At the upper end of this court, and comfortably closing it, there is an old-fashioned house, with bright little diamond-paned windows scattered over its front, and fantastical little dormers scattered over its roof. Coquettish piazzas run around its sides, and marvellous chimney turrets, in which the sparrows rear noisy families, crown its summit. And in this delightful retreat, known to the initiated as the *café* of *La Petite Madame*, you can obtain, for the small sum of one franc, an omelet or a cutlet, and a glass of Rhenish, which cannot be excelled for its price in all France.

Sitting on the veranda of Madame's hospitable house one summer afternoon about a week after the events just related, were Arthur and Dudley. Between them was a little square table on which stood a bottle of that same Rhenish, while over them the sun poured its light and warmth, making, with the aid of the lattice-work, brilliant checker-boards of them and their surroundings. Dividing his attention between the thin ribbon of smoke that wavered from the end of his cigar in alternate sections of dark steel blue and pearly white, and the dusky gold wine in his long-stemmed glass, Arthur was moved to regard Curley from under the rim of his hat, which, being tilted down over his eyes, necessitated his leaning his head back to see him, and to remark:

"Isn't this jolly?"

"You can bet your sweet life it is," said that young gentleman slangily, but emphatically. "It is like getting out of prison."

Arthur nodded, and returned to the contemplation of his cigar.

Many times before had he sat on this porch and been made a checker-board of by the lattice and the sun; but never before had he discovered how pleasant it was. When *La Petite Madame* made her appearance to inquire if the gentleman desired anything more, he smiled upon her, when replying in the negative, in such a way as to induce that charming woman to softly pat his shoulder in a motherly manner as she retired. And the great hulking Newfoundland dog, Fidèle, which belongs to the house, came slouching around the corner, and, commencing to turn himself around in the conventional manner, suddenly gave it up and flopped down by Arthur's chair, it being too warm for etiquette. And Arthur leaned over and scratched Fidèle's head, which act of courtesy being acknowledged by an upward glance from the dog's soft brown eyes and a slight movement of his tail, Arthur returned contentedly to his cigar and his wine.

"Did you have a nice ride this morning?" he said presently.

"Ever so nice," replied Curley. "The Bois was lovely, and they insisted on my drinking a glass of ale when we got out."

"Had to hold you, I suppose," said Arthur, "and pour it down your throat, eh?"

"Um," assented Curley.

"Wish I was sick myself," said Arthur.

"Oh, no!" said Curley, with an air of superior knowledge born of experience, "oh, no, you don't!"

"I don't suppose they would send *me* fresh violets every morning, and take me out riding if I was."

"They were talking about you this morning," said Curley.

"Were they?" said Arthur quickly, and then adding in a tone of indifference, "They must have been hard up for a subject of conversation," he filliped the ash from his cigar over the railing.

"Yes, we were," replied Curley. "Your aunt said how good it was of you not to leave me even to come and see them. I didn't see it myself. I lost two bouquets and a ride by your laziness. Then she said what a hero you were to go in swimming with me that night in the Bay of Biscay; what a brave—Hold on!" he exclaimed laughingly, holding up his arm in defence, for Arthur had grasped the bottle in a threatening manner. "Let me finish,

can't you? What a brave fellow you were, and what a pity it was you were such a reprobate. She begged me not to give you up in despair, and I said that I wouldn't."

Arthur inwardly winced a little at this, although he understood that Dudley was turning off the remark in jest. At the same time, he knew that his name had been more or less involved in the scandal of the past week, exaggerated stories of his meeting with Merrin having got abroad. Some reports even declared that they had fought a duel. But the fact was, that as days went by, he was more and more disinclined to be called to account for the past which he had put behind him. He had relinquished his armor and sat in the sunlight, enjoying his cakes and ale; and, in this condition he was sensitive to the talk of the world, and super-sensitive to Gertrude's opinion of him. Such allusion as that just made, therefore, disturbed him.

"Why," he said, with an attempt at unconcern, "what gossip about me have they got hold of now?"

"Oh, nothing," said Curley quickly, seeing that his remark was taken seriously. "I was only in fun. Your aunt was talking very nicely about you, and then said all of a sudden that it beat the devil how Americans here gossiped about one another."

"What! my aunt said that?" inquired Arthur.

"Well, she didn't say it exactly in those words," said Dudley, "but that was what she meant. She said that she had even heard *you* talked of. Just think of that, you innocent old saint! Even heard scandal about you! And then your cousin said, 'Which of course we don't believe,' and looked at me with those eyes of hers so that I wanted to skip right off and find the fellow who said it, and lick him."

"Humph!" said Arthur incredulously, blowing out a ring of smoke, and sending a smaller one through it.

"It is mean of you to do that," said Curley, seriously, "when you know that I can't." Then, after sundry fruitless efforts to make rings, he continued, "Your aunt wanted to know why you did not come riding with us."

"What did you tell her?" said Arthur.

"Why, I ought to have told her that it was because you were a fraud," replied Curley, indignantly, "but I didn't. I told her that you had a previous engagement with the President of the Young Men's Christian Association. I tell you what though, if I had known that you were going to get out of it as you did, I would not

have gone myself. I supposed of course you were going. Then, after all your pretty talk about its being such a nice morning for a drive, the air so balmy and refreshing, quite invigorating in fact, to put me in the carriage and shut the door and wish us a pleasant time, and raise your hat and walk off! Really, Arthur, your cheek is something phenomenal!"

Whereat Arthur only laughed.

Several days before he had called upon his aunt and cousin, and found both the ladies "not at home." He naturally translated the words "not at home" to him. He asked for Madame de Beaugarde, but she was also out. This rebuff, as he construed it, chagrined him, and he determined that he would not render himself liable to a repetition of it. The next morning, however, as though to dispel any unpleasant impression, his aunt and Gertrude, while out riding in the Countess de Beaugarde's carriage, stopped in the Rue du Croissant, and sent the footman up with a message to know if Arthur and Mr. Dudley would ride with them to the Bois. Arthur's heart began to thump when he understood the message, and the meaning of the attention bestowed upon him, and then down he went to the carriage in considerable trepidation and greeted the two ladies, scarcely knowing how much he had felt their, or rather Gertrude's condemnation, until he found himself free from it.

Going back to his room, Arthur bundled Dudley up in a huge ulster, and brought him down and placed him in the carriage. Gertrude quietly made him take her seat so that he would not ride with his back to the horses, while Arthur himself sat opposite his aunt. The latter evidently felt it an exertion to talk, and Arthur had just as little inclination to sustain a conversation. Gertrude and Dudley, however, chatted away easily and merrily, while every now and then Arthur stole a glance at her face. It was little more than a year since he had parted from her at the gate of her cottage in Newport. It seemed to him like five years. He had left her a girl, he found her a woman. She had been exceeding pretty then, now she was beautiful. Her face had lost a little of its youthful, rounded outline; but it had gained in character and expression. The same glory of golden-brown hair, with its obstinate little tresses, was there; the same large, dark-gray eyes; the same poise of the shapely head; the same little "ways," the same Gertrude, in fact, only more—Arthur could not tell exactly what, unless it was more fascinating. Recalling the stories

which he had heard from time to time of the sensation she had created in society during the past winter, he could readily understand it. She was certainly very self-possessed. Of course, why should she not be? Every time that the silence maintained by his aunt and himself became noticeable, she engaged him in conversation. It was very polite of her, but it was the politeness she would have shown to a stranger. Was that her intention? Hot and resentful at the thought, he asked himself what he had done that she should treat him so distantly. But this question the recollection of the past month answered so promptly, as to rather disconcert him. After all though, it could not be due to any scandal she had heard, else she and her aunt would scarcely have called to take him out riding. Why was it, then? Because she was engaged? That must be it. Their long friendship was to cease, was to count for nothing, now that this new attachment had arisen. She was letting him know that he must not presume on their former intimacy. Mr. Yates might not like it. Great heavens! If such a man as Yates could win her love, why should he, Arthur, care for her friendship? He would show her that he understood; that it would be quite unnecessary for her to make it plainer. And all the time that he chafed and fretted he was watching her furtively, noting the little locks of soft hair that escaped from under her large, Gainsborough hat; the transparent color the wind had brought to her cheeks; the white, even, little teeth when she laughed; watching all the time, hoping to find some defect, something that depreciated her, some word or action that he could find fault with, quarrel with. But it was of no use. With a sigh he had to acknowledge that she was perfect. But Mr. Yates! That affair surely betrayed a flaw. He could quarrel with that. Any woman who could find congenial company in such a stupid, common, vulgar fellow—! Why the very idea of that man's daring to take her hand made his blood boil. It was too much! And turning away, he fell to gnawing the end of his mustache in gloomy silence.

After a spasmodic effort to talk to his aunt, Arthur soon found himself again watching Gertrude, even smiling at some witty retort she had made to Curley. How bright she was! Curley was bright in his way, but he was no match for her. And how stylishly she held her head! What a pretty little hand she had! He remembered how she had slipped that little hand into his one moonlight night, because she was sorry for him

in his disbeliefs. How sweet of her that was! He had told her then that she could always keep him good, and had not his words been true? Had not he gone to the devil the moment that she had forsaken him? His saint! His queen! Ay, there had been the trouble: she was his queen. It was left for another man to make her something nearer, something dearer. Fool that he was! It was reserved for a fellow like Yates to make her all his own. *All his own!* For the first time the idea of Gertrude as a wife entered Arthur's mind, and worked, and gradually undermining the ideal edifice which time and habit had erected, this castle in the air, it fell with a crash which thrilled through his heart, and from the ruins sprang Love who had been a-hiding there. All a man's own! Yes, why not? She was a woman. She was no unreal creation, no saint, no idol, to be put in a niche and worshipped. She was a woman, and even he, Arthur, might have striven to win her, might have made her his. Who could say? His, from the soft hair that blew about her temples to the soles of her dainty feet; her wit, her intelligence, her pride, her impetuous anger, her tender sympathy, her imperious frown and saucy laugh, all his own, even to the rustle of her skirt and the faint perfume that hovered around her; his, to have, to hold, forever! As he watched Gertrude during the progress of these passionate thoughts, her personality seemed to flood his whole soul, his heart was drowned in her being. He became startled, anxious, alarmed at the intensity of his emotions.

"Thank God!" he said to himself, when the carriage at last stopped before their door. "I would not take that ride again to be an admiral." To his aunt he said, "I am much obliged, I have enjoyed the ride immensely, and I am sure it has done Frank, here, a world of good."

He had said nothing to Dudley of his intentions, but when his aunt and cousin came again to take the invalid out for a ride, he had quietly excused himself, and walked off. He would have given much to have gone, and spent a wretched hour during Dudley's absence. Yet he was glad he had had resolution enough to overcome the temptation. "They don't want me," he had said to himself; "I was only in the way last time. It is all up with me, as far as she is concerned, and I won't hang around like a whining beggar. I will get away from here and cut the whole business."

It was of this ride that Dudley was speaking, as he and Arthur

sat sipping their wine in the sunlight, at *La Petite Madame's*.

"No," continued Dudley: "I never would have gone if I had thought you were not going, too. It was a scurvy trick to play a fellow!"

After a short silence, he said, in a different tone, with a sort of shy embarrassment, "Do you know, Arley, I don't believe I care to go out riding with them any more."

"No?" said Arthur, looking at him with surprise. "I thought you liked to ride."

"Well, I do," said Dudley, hesitatingly, "and it is very good of them to take me, but—" Then, looking up at Arthur with an expression of comic desperation, he exclaimed, "I don't know why I should not tell you. I am fearfully in love with Miss Alden. I suppose every fellow is that ever met her, but that don't help me any. The fact of the matter is, I have about made up my mind to quit and go away from here. I am strong enough now, the doctor thinks."

"All right," said Arthur. "I am only waiting for you."

"What!" said Dudley, eagerly. "Will you go?"

"Of course I will," replied Arthur.

"Why, now, that is ever so jolly!" exclaimed Dudley. "When shall we start?"

"I am ready to start to-morrow, if the doctor will let us," said Arthur. "We can travel slowly, and stop over at some of the towns."

"That suits me to a dot," said Dudley. "I got a letter from mother, this morning. She is coming over here, by the way. Meantime, she says she wants me to leave Paris and go farther south. She does not think that Paris is a very good place for me," and he looked at Arthur with a laugh. "Poor mother," he added, tenderly, "poor little mother! She is all broke up on account of my having fallen overboard and got sick, and all the rest of it. She has inclosed a letter for you, but I don't know whether I ought to let you have it without reading it first. Especially when she thinks you are the greatest fellow that ever lived. So brave and so good. She doesn't know you as well as I do."

"No," said Arthur rather seriously: "that's a fact."

"She does too," exclaimed Curley indignantly. "She knows you a long sight better than you know yourself. I never saw such

a fellow. You are always running yourself down. Here, take your letter."

Arthur took the note, and opening it, read the hurriedly written lines. It was filled with extravagant words of praise and gratitude, and the ink was blurred in places where the mother's tears had fallen as she wrote.

"God will reward you, Arthur," it ended. "God will reward you. And I pray to him night and morning that he will guard and keep you from all harm, even as you have kept my boy."

As he folded the letter, and put it in his pocket, Arthur looked at Curley, and nodded. Then, tilting his hat down over his eyes, he sat smoking in silence. Having been conquered by fate, disarmed, and forced to acknowledge his allegiance to a superior power, his mood was somewhat humble. And he found himself wondering whether this woman's prayers had had anything to do with the curious combination of circumstances that had kept him from being at this moment, an outlaw.

"You say that your mother is coming over here, Curley?" asked Arthur presently.

"Yes," replied Dudley. "Poor mother! she is dreadfully alarmed about me. I am glad that she is coming, too," he added thoughtfully, with a little sigh. "I did not like to suggest it, but I have been wishing that she would come."

"When will she be here?"

"Let me see," said Curley, looking over one of his letters, "I think she starts to-day. Yes, the fifteenth of June, that is to-day. She is coming by the Kennedy line to Havre."

"Well," said Arthur, "when we get settled in some pleasant place, I can run down by train to meet her. And now, old man, what do you say? Shall we up anchor and get out of this to-morrow?"

"Yes,—let's," said Curley, brightening up.

"All right," said Arthur, rising, and rapping on the table for his score.

And, having settled the bill, they bade the little madame good-by, and passed out into the glad sunshine. Down the street they went arm in arm together; and the next day they turned their faces toward the South, and Paris saw them no more.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. YATES was commonly spoken of in Washington as a very lucky fellow. Certainly, the successful suitor for the hand of Miss Gertrude Alden deserved that title. The first few days succeeding his acceptance were days of such rapture that he could not contain himself. He was boyish in the exuberance of his spirits. He held himself painfully erect, expanded his chest, and moved with a cheerful alacrity; laughed, talked, and beamed impartially upon all mankind; and, when he was not otherwise engaged, he cracked his finger-joints, or slapped the palms of his hands together,—physical manifestations that advertised his joy to the world.

But in less than a week came the reaction. In less than a week the serpent lifted its head and looked around upon Mr. Yates' new Eden and, unfortunately for that gentleman, found in it a great deal to feed upon. After the excitement of his acceptance had subsided, the calm assertion which Gertrude had coupled with it, to wit: that she did not love him, began forcing itself upon his notice, began repeating itself like the constant dropping of water upon a man's head, until at last all that he had endured before was as nothing compared to this new torment; this constant repetition of the thought, "She is mine, but she cares nothing for me." Before, he had loved her desperately, madly, but hopelessly. He had been forced to stand afar off, and worship. Now he was permitted to stand at her side, and love her. She was his, and yet he dared not so much as take her hand without fear of a rebuff. And so the snake raised its head, and assuming that most malignant, deadly guise, jealousy, it luxuriated in this new-found Eden, and grew and waxed strong until at times it almost proved too strong for Mr. Yates's control.

After her engagement was announced, the most exacting chaperon could not have found fault with Gertrude's conduct. Although there was not the least indication of affection in her manner to her betrothed, she observed all the traditions and

customs which modern civilization prescribes for the young woman about to marry. She withdrew herself from indiscriminate attention, became reserved in her conversation, and sedate in her manner. There were, to be sure, those who thought her discretion seemed more like listlessness, her reserved manner like pre-occupation of mind; but then, one cannot satisfy everybody. One thing, however, Gertrude made clearly apparent to society, and that was, that having accepted Mr. Yates, she intended that society should treat him with all honor and respect. She drew around him the magic circle of her own individuality, pointed his dull remarks with her own wit, gave meaning to his platitudes, drew to the surface his best qualities, and all with a deference to his utterances that blinded him and many others to the fact of his inanity. To be sure there were some of those previously referred to, who, standing by as spectators, saw that she played a part, and wondered why, and then lost their wonder in admiration because she played it so well. They saw that she was giving this sorry knight, her promised husband, such an opportunity, such sweet assistance, in the winning of his spurs as rarely falls to the lot of a man. It was admirable, but it was pathetic. And many a man willing to give half his life for half the chance, swore that it was a shame, and turned away in disgust from the lucky Mr. Yates.

It was not that gentleman's fault that he did not appreciate what the gods had provided him. He was as nature made him, and the base metal of his composition gave no response to the test. He was surprised at his own suddenly developed genius, during this brief period; but he had no perception of Gertrude's agency in the matter. All his life he had brooded over the snubs and slights of his associates in society, and now that he seemed to have suddenly risen above this condition he lost his head. He began to believe in himself, naturally enough; in his wit, his intelligence, in his fine traits as he saw them exhibited under Gertrude's magic touch. He lost the humility which before had not only made him tolerable with men, but, by appealing to their pity, had even attracted women. He became self-opinionated, conceited. And this was the only result of Gertrude's consideration. No, not the only result; for with the development of this conceit came a certain amount of assurance which reacted directly upon her. Believing in his newly acquired value, he was emboldened to give utterance to the dissatisfaction and jealousy that was

gnawing within him. At first in veiled words, vague intimations, followed by a little laugh that deprecated resentment. And then, as Gertrude ignored his insinuations, in more pronounced assertions. He criticised the gentlemen who paid her the least attention,—he criticised and disparaged them to her, until, construing her self-restraint as subjection, he openly protested against her receiving attention from any one but him. This little exercise of authority was sweet and cooling to the fever within his breast,—so sweet that it beguiled him altogether of his prudence. He began giving her advice, in a semi-authoritative way, as to her conduct; advice which he labored to make appear as emanating from an unprejudiced desire for her welfare, the advice of a man of the world to an unsophisticated girl, but which was so evidently instigated by his jealousy, a child could have seen through the thin pretence. Gertrude herself could have laughed at the gravity with which he gave her the benefit of her own ideas,—could have laughed if she had not been given too much to weeping just at this time. And still she maintained her wonderful self-constraint, was patient with him even when he asserted his authority over her in public, assisted him, upheld him, and palliated his solecisms, to the surprise of those who knew, or thought they knew, her character.

“I never saw any one so changed in all my life,” exclaimed Kate.

“She is certainly looking very badly,” replied her mother. “I never saw her so pale and thin before.”

“I don’t mean that,” said Kate impatiently. “But she does not seem to have any spirit. It is absurd, the authority that man assumes over her.”

“But she is engaged to him, Katie,” replied the old-fashioned Catherine rebukingly.

“I don’t care if she is engaged to him,” retorted the modern Kate. “He is not her husband yet; and, even if he were, he would have no right to treat her like a slave. It is my opinion he will go too far some day.”

And then, after a little thoughtful pause, Kate compressed her lips, and added, with great deliberation, “I wish he would! I just wish he would!”

“O Katie!” protested Mrs. Arlingford.

But, on second thought, she was not sure but that she wished the same thing.

Undoubtedly there were times when Mr. Yates himself grew alarmed at his own temerity. There were times when his eyes had an anxious look, and his manner grew uncertain, as though he had lost his way. Undoubtedly he had secret forebodings that he was not in the right path, and made many resolutions to retrace his steps. But he was powerless. His morbid jealousy had grown too strong for his control; and his intense desire to isolate Gertrude from all the rest of the world, to have her, body and soul, all to himself, pushed him on, despite his misgivings. Each day his intolerance increased. A slave risen to power becomes a tyrant, and many began to pity Gertrude for the treatment she would plainly have to expect from her future husband.

Such a line of conduct could not, however, be pursued forever; and Mr. Yates soon pushed it to a crisis. As Kate had foreseen, the day arrived when he went too far; but, contrary to her hopes, the result was not a rupture of the engagement. Mr. Yates was too weak a man to be broken with very easily.

The spring had set in with bleak, inclement weather, and Mrs. Arlingford's health declined. She had never entirely recovered from the illness which had marked the success of her scheme to make Gertrude the affianced wife of Mr. Yates. She continued listless, low-spirited, and nervous, starting at the shutting of a door, and weeping without apparent cause. The doctor, an old friend of the family, shook his head gravely over the inefficacy of sedatives and tonics, and smiled an allopathic smile at Madame Catherine's homœopathic suggestions.

"What Mrs. Arlingford really needs," he said, "is perfect rest and a change of climate. And what is more, my young lady, here, Miss Gertrude, needs the same medicine."

"Why?" said Gertrude, with unusual interest in her manner, "do you think there is anything the matter with me?"

Whereupon the old gentleman looked at her curiously, as he replied, "One would think you would almost be pleased if I said 'yes.'"

"O doctor, how absurd!" said Gertrude, changing color. "Of course I don't want to be sick. Who ever does?"

"O my dear," retorted the doctor, "people sometimes do, for it is a queer world. Now if you want to convince us that you are not one of that silly sort, you will go to work and keep that color in your cheeks that you have now. The old man of the Potomac flats chooses just such pale faces as yours. I think you and your

aunt had better both of you pack up and be off to Europe. A sea voyage will do you more good than all the medicine I can give you, allopathic or homœopathic. Eh, Mrs. Arlingford?"

"I think you are right about the sea voyage," said Catherine, who was with her sister-in-law at the time of this visit. "Why don't you do that, Mary?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Arlingford, looking helplessly at Gertrude. "What do you think, my dear?"

"If it would make you well," said Gertrude, arising restlessly, and going to the window, "we had better go."

"It would be so nice," said the major's wife; "perhaps you would meet Arthur. I wish I could go," she added, sighing.

"Would it not do just as well to go to the mountains, doctor?" said Gertrude, abruptly. "It is such an undertaking to go abroad, and I hate the sea."

"No, my dear," said the doctor, "I don't think it would. Your aunt needs a complete change, and I think the sea air would help her immensely. However, talk it over among yourselves; there is no immediate hurry."

And so the subject, having been broached, was discussed at intervals by the members of both families. Major Arlingford strongly urged his sister-in-law to follow the doctor's advice. Knowing that she had not been strong for years, he was not surprised when the doctor confided to him that her malady was more serious than was generally supposed, being, in fact, an enlargement of an artery which threatened to result in an aneurism. "If she goes abroad," said the doctor, "it will give her an opportunity to consult Perault, who makes a specialty of such things. Then, besides, it seems to me that she has got something on her mind which is worrying her. Whether it is her husband's death, or Gertrude's engagement, or what it is, I don't know. But I think a complete change of climate and surroundings will do her good."

And so Major Arlingford favored the voyage, and wrote to his aunt, the Countess de Beaugarde, bespeaking her kind offices in the matter.

As for Mrs. Arlingford, herself, she would go or not, as Gertrude wished. In fact it was almost pitiable to see how, at this period, she ignored herself in anxious solicitude for Gertrude's happiness. She followed the girl's every movement with a yearning look in her eyes. If Gertrude's head ached, it alarmed her; if she was silent, she became unhappy; she besieged her with tender

attentions, and, if Gertrude failed to respond, the ever-ready tears would come to her dim eyes. The consequence was, that Gertrude gradually constrained herself to appear happy and contented in Mrs. Arlingford's presence. She did not understand the real reason of her aunt's altered manner, but attributed it to her illness. The necessity, whatever caused it, was irksome. This constant playing a part wearied her. She wanted the rules of her conduct laid down for her; she wanted to be relieved of the responsibility of acting for herself; she wanted to be governed, she did not want to govern; and when her aunt left the decision of this European trip to her, she rebelled against the burden of this affection.

Why could not her Aunt Mary see that it was a matter for her to determine? Gertrude knew that she was pleased with the project, that secretly she wanted to go. Why, then, would she not go? Why would she not resume her accustomed authority, and take her, Gertrude, without consulting any one? It would be such a simple matter. If she only did that, why then she would have to go with her aunt, of course, even at the risk of meeting Arthur. Not that she had any cause to fear meeting him, she said, proudly. She would not let the thought of him influence her action in any manner! Only, it was clearly a matter for her aunt to decide.

But no: Mrs. Arlingford was fearful of crossing Gertrude's inclination. She quoted Gertrude's own arguments against the trip, and tenderly reminded her of her well-known aversion to the sea.

"I understand your feeling about it, perfectly, my dear," she said, one day; "and I would not cause you a moment's unhappiness, if I could avoid it. You know that, Gertrude, don't you?"

"Of course, Aunt Mary, I know that," replied Gertrude.

"You must always believe that, dear," continued her aunt. "And, as for this voyage, what does it matter? An old woman like me can't expect to live always. I have no doubt a month or two in the mountains will do just as well."

Then Gertrude turned around on her, and said decisively, almost angrily, "Aunt Mary, don't talk like that. We will go to Europe. They all say that it is necessary for your health, and we will go. So now it is settled, and don't let us talk about it any more."

In this way was the decision reached.

As for Mr. Yates. In accordance with the studious observance of formality which she had adopted toward her betrothed, Gertrude informed him of their intention immediately after the resolution was taken. Somewhat to her surprise, Mr. Yates cordially approved of the plan. He set forth the various advantages of the trip with as much clearness as the doctor himself had done.

Then, getting up and moving around with a sort of awkward embarrassment which characterized him when he had anything on his mind, he added, "The fact of the matter is, I have some business in London, which may take me over there myself. I ought to have attended to it long ago, only, of course I did not want to go away, under the circumstances. But, it is odd, isn't it? I had just about made up my mind that I would have to go, when you spoke of your intention. So now we can all go together. It could not have happened better, could it?" And he forced a smile that was somewhat belied by the anxious expression in his eyes, as he finally looked at Gertrude for the first time.

Gertrude was silent for a few moments.

"I scarcely think that would be desirable, Mr. Yates," she said, finally.

"Why not?" said Yates, eagerly, the smile instantly leaving his face. "I don't see why not."

"Well," said Gertrude, slowly, "I don't know, but I don't think Aunt Mary would approve it."

"Yes, she would, too!" said Yates. "I know she would, if I talked to her. I'll ask her right now."

"You know that she does not see any one," replied Gertrude. "However, I have no objection to telling her what you propose."

"All right," said Yates, only half satisfied. "If you tell her that I have got to go to London, anyway, on business, I know she won't object to my going with you."

But when Gertrude told her aunt what Mr. Yates had said, she did object seriously; in fact, she seemed greatly dismayed. She did not, however, positively oppose the suggestion in so many words; she simply relinquished her own intention of going.

"After all," she said, "I don't think I care very much about it, Gertrude. Perhaps we had better give up the idea altogether."

"Why?" said Gertrude. "Because Mr. Yates wants to accompany us?"

"Well, my dear," replied her aunt, "I don't think it would be pleasant. That is, I don't think it would be exactly the thing."

"Very well," said Gertrude. "Then I will tell him so."

"But I am afraid he won't like it," said her aunt, weakly. "It would be much better not to say anything more about it."

Gertrude looked at her in surprise. "Really, auntie," she said, "I don't understand you lately. You are so changed. You seem to be afraid of Mr. Yates, and yet I thought you liked him."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Arlingford, hastily, "I am not afraid of him, of course; that is absurd! Only I don't want to have any trouble, and it is just as well to let the matter drop."

"Indeed we won't," said Gertrude, resolutely. "The doctor says that it is necessary for you to go to Europe, and we will go, no matter what Mr. Yates says. I certainly can't understand why he should be allowed to interfere with your plans, or why he should be offended. I am quite sure he won't be when he understands how you feel about his going."

But Mr. Yates was offended, and was at no pains to conceal it.

"I don't see why I should not go," he said, sullenly.

"Simply because my aunt does not wish it," said Gertrude. "Is not that enough?"

"Well," said Yates, obstinately, "I don't see what objection you can have. It might be different if I was not going to Europe anyway; but, as it is, I don't see what is to prevent me from taking passage on the same ship."

"There is nothing to prevent you," answered Gertrude, coldly; "nothing but my aunt's wish."

"*Your* wish, I guess you mean," said Yates.

And as he said it, he stopped in his restless walk, and glanced at her. The jealousy that had coiled itself around his heart was tightening its hold. There was something so baleful, so malignant, in the gaze, that Gertrude felt, for the second time, a sudden, vague fear of the man. She understood now what her aunt had meant by her desire to avoid "trouble." But though her cheek paled she did not falter.

"Very well," she said quietly; "*my* wish, if you choose to consider it so."

Mr. Yates' eyes fell under her calm gaze, and resuming his walk he said, hesitatingly, "I don't see the necessity of your going to Europe, anyway."

Ignoring his inconsistency, Gertrude said, quietly, "I have already told you, it is on account of my aunt's health."

"That is all very well," replied Yates, doggedly, "only you don't seem to think it is necessary to consult my wishes."

"Do you consult mine?" said Gertrude, beginning to lose patience.

"Don't I?" cried Yates, turning upon her passionately. "Don't I? There is not an hour of the day, or of the night, either, that I am not thinking what I can do for you. Haven't I done everything to please you, no matter how much it costs?"

"I have told you often enough," said Gertrude, "that it does not please me to have you spend money on my account. You do it to please yourself."

"What do you ever do to please me, I'd like to know?" he answered. "You don't seem to care any more for me than if I was a stranger." And as he spoke his eyes filled with tears of passionate resentment.

"Did I ever say that I did?" replied Gertrude.

"No!" shouted Yates, "and that is just it!"

"When you asked me to marry you, did I not tell you that I did not love you?"

"Then why are you willing to marry me?" he cried, stopping in his tramp, and confronting her.

Gertrude was silent for a moment, and then replied, quietly, "That is my affair."

"And it is my affair, too!" exclaimed Yates. And then growing pale, he added, in a constrained voice, "How do I know that you don't love somebody else?"

"If you think that," replied Gertrude, drawing herself up, "if you think that, you are at liberty to withdraw from your engagement. I will release you with pleasure."

He looked at her silently for a moment, rubbing his chin with his hand, and then said, moodily, "I expect you would. But I don't choose to be released. You promised to marry me, and I intend that you shall keep your promise. All the same, I have a right to know whether you care for any one else."

"Mr. Yates!" exclaimed Gertrude, angrily, "I think I have borne enough of this! It is about time that we came to some sort of understanding. You have no right to question me or control me in any way. For the past month I have tried my best to satisfy your claims upon my consideration. But, instead of appreciating my forbearance, you have used it to assume a most unwarranted authority over me. I could have endured that, but now

that you add to it your insulting suspicions, I tell you plainly, sir, once for all, that I will not submit to it any longer!"

"What have I done?" said Yates, sulkily.

"There is no need to tell you what you have done," said Gertrude, with tears of indignation in her eyes. "If you cannot understand, there is no use trying to explain."

"I haven't done anything," persisted Yates, looking at her uneasily. "I only said that I don't approve of your going to Europe, and I don't." Then suddenly raising his voice he reiterated, "I don't! I don't! and I have got something to say about it. Do you know what people will think?" Gertrude shrugged her shoulders impatiently, and vouchsafed no reply.

"They will think," continued Yates, with a darkening face, "They will say that—that you are going abroad to meet your *friend*, Mr. Arlingford. Now that he is such a hero, and—"

But he was not permitted to finish his sentence. Gertrude turned upon him, and with a little gesture of her hand, stopped him. Drawing her slight form erect, she threw her head back proudly, and with the blood suffusing her face and neck, she looked at him with her gray eyes dark with wrath. Then the blood slowly receded, leaving her pale as marble. Drawing a long breath, she said in a voice of passionate protest, "This is more than I can bear! What do you mean by saying such things? Do you want to make me hate you? If you don't, you are acting like a fool!"

Mr. Yates stared at her open-mouthed for a moment, utterly at a loss to understand the cause of this gusty outburst of passion. He had not anticipated anything of the sort from his remark. To be sure he knew that he was acting like a fool to refer to Arthur in such a way, even before Gertrude announced the fact so plainly; but then he had acted like a fool from the beginning. He knew that and felt crushed under the weight of his own weakness, of his inability to act otherwise than as a fool in everything connected with this great affair of his life. He was in a labyrinth, the mazes of which bewildered him. A lightning flash of intuition in his dark, passion-clouded soul showed him Arthur's face in that mystery, and in a sullen, savage sort of desperation he persisted in blundering on in this path, pointed out by jealousy, blind, reckless even, to where it might lead.

For a few moments he made no immediate reply to Gertrude's

indignant demand for an explanation, but muttered to himself some inaudible words.

"Mr. Yates," continued Gertrude, with her teeth set together, and a dangerous droop to her eyelids (for was not here again, the same humiliating charge contained in the anonymous letter!) "Mr. Yates, I insist upon your telling me what you mean!"

"Well, what I mean," he said, suddenly bursting forth in a very loud voice, "what I mean is that everybody knows that he is in Paris; and now if you go over there, won't everybody say that you have gone to be with him, to nurse him? And I won't have it! That's all! I won't have it!"

Surprised, perplexed, startled, Gertrude's curiosity and anxiety at these strange words, for the moment quelled her anger. She finally said:

"What *are* you talking about? Nurse him! Nurse who?"

"Who?" cried Yates. "Why, Arthur Arlingford, that's who!"

But Gertrude did not notice his rudeness. Her face paled, and, bending toward him, with parted lips and wide-open eyes, she said, in a low voice,—

"Is he ill?"

In those three words she told her secret.

Never in his life before had Mr. Yates heard her speak like that. Never before had he seen that look in her eyes. It was a glimpse of heaven, but the door had not been opened for him. On the contrary, for him it opened the door of hell. And yet his passion was so great that to have her in this mood, to hear again the wonderful vibrations of her voice, to look into her moist, luminous eyes, to see the infinite depths of tenderness which suddenly transformed her whole body, he would have descended even lower than hell. As she stood thus before him so gentle, so tender, so loving, it was a sudden revelation of bliss such as he, even in his wildest dreams, had never imagined. And then a dark, wild fancy entered his brain, an unholy desire to seize her in his arms and tightly hold her soft young form until he had crushed the life out of it! She would be his then, and no one could ever rob him of her! For a moment he hesitated, and then with sense enough not to dwell upon the thought, he turned quickly away and walked to the window and stood there with his back towards her.

Then Gertrude, all unwitting of her danger, began to question him. What did he mean? What had he heard? And he, hating himself, cursing himself, for it, instead of killing her, was weakly

forced to tell her how Arthur Arlingford had played the hero. Grudgingly and meagrely, in answer to her questions, he told only what he had to tell.

"I saw it in the papers," he said, biting his nails. "I didn't read it, I just glanced at it. It wasn't anything very wonderful."

"But tell me, what was it?" said Gertrude, in the same low tone.

"A man fell off the ship into the water, and he—he got him out."

"He jumped into the ocean after him!" said Gertrude, with a long breath.

"Yes," said Yates, sullenly. "But that wasn't anything. Mr. Moresby did the same thing last summer at Newport, and they didn't make any fuss about it. But if anything happens in the navy, it is telegraphed all over as though it wasn't their business to do that sort of thing. I'd like to know what they get paid for! The country has no need for a navy, at any rate," and much more he muttered to himself that was inaudible.

"And was he hurt?" said Gertrude, with bated breath. "Is he ill?"

"I don't know whether he is or not!" exclaimed Yates, fiercely; "and what's more, I don't care!"

Then a short silence followed, at the end of which he turned abruptly, and, picking up his hat, strode toward the door.

Gertrude, with a long-drawn breath, seemed like one awakening from a dream. "Are you going?" she asked, mechanically.

Then he turned and looked at her, and she, meeting his glance, saw a strange look in his eyes, a look that made her heart stop beating. In an instant the truth flashed upon her. What had she done? Her head drooped, the blood flew to her face, and she stood before him, for the first time, guilty and ashamed. For the first time he had her completely at a disadvantage. It was a golden opportunity for Mr. Yates, but he did not understand how to use it. Gertrude, discomfited and humbled, at last stole a fearful, upward glance at his face. But her eyes with their shy, appealing expression, dropped under the hard, threatening gaze which met them. Pressing his thin white lips together, and moving his head slowly from side to side, he said, in a choked voice, "I wish to God he had drowned!"

Then instantly Gertrude's embarrassment and humility vanished. She raised her head quickly, indignantly, her eyes flashed, and her lips parted; but before she could say the words which struggled for utterance, the front door slammed, and Mr. Yates was gone.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEN the door closed upon Mr. Yates' irate face, Gertrude sank into a chair and hid her burning face in her hands. How long she remained there she did not know. When she finally arose, with a sudden return to her surroundings, she looked at her watch. It was ten minutes to four. Hurrying upstairs she put on her hat and a light wrap, and, buttoning her gloves as she went, left the house. Walking rapidly until she came to Pennsylvania Avenue, Gertrude slackened her pace to the ordinary promenade. In a few moments she saw the well-known form of her uncle, the major, with his military bearing, advancing toward her. This was the hour at which he usually returned home in the afternoon, a fact which Gertrude had counted on. Nevertheless she greeted him with a little pretence of surprise.

"Which way are you going?" said the major. He was always glad to see Gertrude, but he looked so especially well pleased as she glanced at his face that she knew she should hear that which she had come for.

"I am not going anywhere particularly," replied Gertrude. "I have been in the house all day, and I thought I would take a little walk. So I will walk with you, if you will let me."

"I shall be delighted," said the major, gallantly. "Do you know, it seems to me, Miss Gertrude, that we see very little of you lately. It is hardly fair of Mr. Yates to monopolize you altogether."

"I don't think it is Mr. Yates' fault," said Gertrude. "You know that auntie does not go out at all now, and I don't like to leave her alone."

"Yes, yes, my dear, I know," said the major. "I do hope this sea trip will do you both good. By the way, talking of the sea, I suppose you have heard of Master Arthur's little adventure?"

"You must not walk so fast, Uncle Tom," said Gertrude, "I cannot keep up with you. No, I have not heard of Arthur's

adventure ; that is, I think I did hear something of it, too. But what was it ? Tell me."

" Well, there is not much to tell," said the major, contradicting the expression of his face. " I only know what was in the papers, and that was a very short telegram from Captain Topman to the Navy Department. Captain Topman commands the " Comet," you know, the ship that Arthur is on." And trying his best to suppress the delight and pride which beamed in his lean, sun-burned face, the major forthwith narrated Arthur's rescue of Dudley. When he had finished he looked at Gertrude and nodded his head, as much as to say, " There ! what do you think of that ? "

Then she, without a word, stopped in the middle of the pavement and held out both of her hands. The major grasped them and held them for a moment, understanding and appreciating this simple reply a great deal better than if she had resorted to words.

" Yes, he saved him," resumed the major, " but they both had a narrow escape. Captain Topman says in his report that if a light breeze had not sprung up and cleared away the fog, it would not have been possible to have rescued either of them. As it was, young Dudley was insensible when they were picked up. Arthur must have had a hard enough time, too, for when they took him into the boat he was utterly exhausted and lost consciousness. He is a very strong, powerfully built young fellow ; you know that, and we may be sure that it was no child's play that made him faint. It seems that his arm was badly injured in some way ; I could not learn how. Both he and young Dudley were left at the hospital at Cherbourg, although Arthur's hurt is nothing serious, you understand. Poor boy ! "

These last words were spoken by the major in an abstracted way, as though his thoughts had travelled across the sea to that Cherbourg hospital. And as the tenderness of his tone struck a responsive chord in Gertrude's heart, she longed to steal her arms about his neck and give free vent to the tears that were silently gathering behind her veil.

" However," added the major, resuming his former cheerful tone, " from what the paper says, I have no doubt they will soon be up and about again. Would you like to see the account ? I think I have the paper here," and he took the journal from the breast pocket of his overcoat, and fixing his eye-glasses, folded it at the proper place, and handed it to Gertrude.

"But I can't read it through my veil," said Gertrude.

"To be sure," said the major, looking curiously over the rim of his glasses at the heavy folds which hid her face, for there was something in her voice which attracted his notice. "To be sure. However, you can take it home with you, if you like. Perhaps it would interest your aunt."

"I am quite sure it would," said Gertrude, "only—don't you want it?"

"Oh, I have no doubt I can find another copy somewhere," said the major, disingenuously, for at that very moment he had a half dozen more copies in his coat pocket. "Won't you come any further?" he continued, for they had stopped at the corner of the street on which Gertrude lived.

"Oh, no, thank you," she replied hurriedly. "It is getting late, and I must go back home." Her aunt and Kate were the last persons she cared to see just at that moment. "Good-by, Uncle Tom. You ought to be very proud of your son," she added, brightly, once more giving him her hand.

"Well, between you and me, Gertrude," said the major with an air of great frankness, "I *am* a little proud of the boy. Good night, my dear," and as he looked after the stylish, pretty figure passing up the street, the major sighed regretfully.

Meanwhile, having accomplished her purpose, Gertrude went directly to her own sitting-room, and shutting the door, sought sanctuary in her bed chamber. Throwing aside her hat and cape and pulling off her gloves, she seated herself at her dressing-table, and spreading the newspaper before her, read the article pointed out to her by the major. There was no more than he had told her, and she soon knew the few lines by heart. It was not enough! She hungered for more, for more details, for more comments. She wondered, resentfully, that the paper was not full of the deed. It was something that the article was headed "A Gallant Act!" But why was there not more said of it?

Then, with her arm resting on the table, and her chin in her hands, she sat staring at herself in the mirror. Staring at a vision of a white young face with its big, dark eyes misty with tears, and a rounded chin that quivered, and a trembling lower lip into which the pretty teeth sank; sat staring at it but without seeing it.

It was a long time before Gertrude finally raised her head. Then pressing her fingers to her eyes to dispel the tears which lingered there, she arose and going to the window leaned her head

against the curtains. Long years ago when she and Arthur were children, they used to read together tales of chivalry and stories of knightly adventure, and when the end had come and Sir Knight had killed the dragon that was about to devour the Princess, or had slain the robbers who were carrying off the distressed damsel, Gertrude would look at him earnestly, and with eyes beaming with sympathy for noble deeds would say: "You would have done that?" and he would answer, "Yes, for you." And child that she was, she was not displeased with his answer. She wondered now if, after it was all over, after they had brought him back to the ship, a hero, if he had thought of her. She wondered whether he was very fond of Dudley. She knew that Dudley was very fond of him, of course. However, after all, it would have made no difference who it was that had fallen overboard, he would have acted just the same. Only she would rather it had not been Dudley, she would rather it had been some one he did not care anything about. Had he thought of her, she wondered, had he thought that she would be glad, that she would honor him for this deed? In those old days when they were children, in those old days when he was her brave knight and hers alone, his first and only thought was what she might think. Now that all the world was honoring him, would he care what she might think? And the tears that were so near the surface again suffused her eyes and her trembling lips whispered: "Oh, my dear, you don't know! you don't know!"

Then suddenly and swiftly she went to her bedside and knelt down. Weeping passionately she hid her face in her hands and tried to pray. But words are small and weak, and there are some griefs they cannot lift. She tried to pray but only wept, unless, indeed, that can be called prayer when one bares the secrets of one's heart to God, as children show their hurts, for pity, to a parent's eye.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

As the day fixed upon for Mrs. Arlingford's departure for Europe drew near, that lady herself, the doctor declared, improved visibly in the mere anticipation. She gradually became more like herself, assumed control in the household, planning and arranging the details of the trip as she had been accustomed to do when a journey was undertaken in the lifetime of her husband. On the other hand, relieved of these irksome and distasteful duties, Gertrude showed but little interest in the prospective voyage; even evincing a disinclination to talk about it. When, however, her aunt, in a conscience-stricken mood relapsed into melancholy and taxed her with sacrificing her own wishes in the matter, and, not without a shade of disappointment, talked of abandoning the project, Gertrude would not hear of it. She did not like the bother and worry of preparation, she said; she would be better pleased when they were on the steamer, which was true enough. For what with contending with her own mutinous heart, and Mr. Yates' sullen displeasure, she was tired and sick and longed to get away from it all.

Not that Mr. Yates had troubled her as much as she had feared. For after their last turbulent meeting she had been a little uneasy as to his future conduct, and looked forward to his next visit with considerable apprehension. But to her surprise, when he called upon her the following day he seemed to have reverted to his hesitating, diffident manner of six months ago. And when she, in pursuance of a determination made the night before, bravely referred to the subject of their last meeting he laughed in an embarrassed way and got up and moved about awkwardly and said in a deprecating tone, "Oh, of course, I didn't mean anything. That's all right!" and tried to turn the subject; and in fact displayed so much placability as to paralyze her effort. She was taken by surprise; she did not understand his conduct. Anticipating being confronted with an angry assumption of

injured feeling, she was instead met by a show of embarrassment and a desire to conciliate that was bewildering. While in one way this was a relief, in another it oppressed her. It was a sort of mental drowning. When she resisted this man's encroachments he receded; when she ceased to resist, he closed over her head until she again struggled for supremacy. However she had made up her mind to have an understanding with him, and she would not relinquish her purpose. He had said things, had made insinuations, she told herself, that were insulting, and she did not intend to quietly submit to such remarks, let him be as conciliating as he pleased. And so, despite his disclaiming all intention to offend, Gertrude insisted on saying that which she had in her mind, perhaps more for her own satisfaction than his.

"Oh, well, of course, you know, I didn't mean anything," Mr. Yates repeated. "That's all right."

"But it is not all right," said Gertrude. "You have no right to say that being engaged to you I may—may care for, or be in love with some one else!" and the guilty blood dyed her face as she spoke.

"Well!" interrupted Yates loudly, "didn't I tell you I didn't mean it!" He did not want to quarrel, but she would force him to it.

"Then you ought not to have said it," replied Gertrude. "And as for my going to Europe to see—to meet my cousin Arthur—"

"I didn't say that!" cried Yates, "I didn't say that! I said people would say so."

"Will you be kind enough to hear me out, Mr. Yates?" said Gertrude. "The idea of such a thing is too absurd to think about. You are pleased to be jealous of me—I beg your pardon," as Yates again interrupted eagerly. "You are pleased to be jealous of me. And now listen to what I say;" and speaking with measured tones and emphasizing her words as one who repeats a lesson learned by rote, she continued: "As far as my cousin is concerned you have no more cause to be jealous than you have for my Uncle Tom, or Kate, or any of the rest of the family. We have been friends all our lives, but Arthur Arlingford has never done me the honor to ask to be anything else than a friend. What is more," and injured pride flashed the fair speaker's cheeks and lit up her eyes quite as successfully as injured innocence could have done, "what is more, if he was to do me that honor, I should certainly

decline it. Do you understand? I should decline it! Now, sir, if you please, we will let this subject drop, and if you ever intimate such a thing to me again, I shall consider it sufficient cause to break our engagement. Will you remember that?"

Yes, Mr. Yates would remember it, but in the delight consequent upon this unexpected, comforting avowal and reconciliation, he could not leave the subject, which was well enough, alone, but with childish eagerness sought to impress upon Gertrude the fact that he had no intention whatever of offending her. He did not mean to say that she cared anything for Arthur, he knew that perfectly well. The idea was absurd! They were friends, of course, that was all right, but as for anything else, he knew all along that Mr. Arlingford was not the sort of man that she would care anything about. And partly to reassure himself more completely, and partly to induce Gertrude to reiterate her pleasing statements, he was proceeding to enumerate Arthur's disadvantages as a husband for any woman, when Gertrude stopped him peremptorily and told him that it was unnecessary to discuss the subject any further.

Now while it was quite possible that Gertrude's elaborate and emphatic declaration was made as much for her own benefit as it was for Mr. Yates', it had the result, as has been said, of causing that gentleman to cease his opposition to her voyage, at least to a great extent. Not that he was entirely satisfied, for the effect of her avowal evaporated in a very few days; but he had been relegated in a great measure to his former state of subjection, and his dissatisfaction found vent only in negative protests, modified by the recollection that he had that avowal to comfort him. He had, as usual, his unhappy self-communings in the privacy of his own rooms, and while he was not always amiable or agreeable in Gertrude's presence, she was spared the worst of his jealous moods.

Mrs. Arlingford nervously feared that Mr. Yates would secretly take passage on the same steamer and appear before them after they had put to sea. But in this she did him an injustice. There was nothing treacherous in Mr. Yates' character; all of his obnoxious qualities were on the surface in plain view. Nevertheless Mrs. Arlingford was not entirely relieved of her apprehensions on this subject until after they were safely aboard the steamer, and outside of Sandy Hook; then as no Mr. Yates appeared, her spirits arose and her improvement became so marked as to surprise her niece at the efficacy of the doctor's prescription.

Her aunt's restored cheerfulness was a source of great satisfaction to Gertrude. It was also a great comfort to find that Mr. Langdon and his father were their fellow passengers. Langdon was so kind and attentive, and yet so unobtrusive.

"I have had my instructions," he said, laughingly, as they watched the pilot go over the side and drop into his boat, which was soon bobbing up and down far astern of them, "I have had my instructions, and they are, to do all in my power to make you and your aunt comfortable, and land you safe and sound in Paris. I have put my father on detached service with your aunt, you see," indicating with his eyes where the elder Mr. Langdon was seated by the side of Mrs. Arlingford's steamer chair, "so that now I am entirely at your disposal."

Gertrude thanked him and smiling, said, "I consider myself very fortunate, and be sure I shall give you a—what is it they call it? Not a 'good report'—special mention, that is it. I shall make special mention of you to the authorities, the authorities at Washington, you know." And then they both laughed.

Having resigned his commission in the navy and emancipated himself from the control of "the authorities at Washington," Gertrude's allusion would have seemed to the uninitiated as somewhat inappropriate. It appears, however, that one afternoon a few days before Gertrude's departure for New York, Kate had had a long and confidential chat with her cousin in the privacy of her own room. The subject of this chat was dress material, gloves and articles of like nature which Gertrude was to purchase for Kate in Paris. This important topic was varied of course by digressions into the prevailing Paris fashions, the best method of keeping kid gloves from spotting during the ocean voyage, and the meanness and tyranny of custom house officers.

These meanderings of the conversation of two young women of a summer's afternoon, used up that afternoon very effectually. Finally, exclaiming at the lateness of the hour, Kate arose to go. Then, as though it was an afterthought, she remarked, "Mr. Langdon is going to Europe on the same steamer with you, Gertie; did you know that?"

"No," said Gertrude, "I did not know it. That will be very nice."

"Yes," said Kate, with a doleful sigh, "it will be very nice—for you. I gave him strict orders to take care of you and show you every attention—that is, within reason, of course."

"*You* gave him orders!" exclaimed Gertrude, drawing herself up in wonderment.

"Yes," said Kate, calmly, but at the same time getting near the door, "*I* gave him orders."

Then Gertrude, by a clever movement, intercepted Kate, and taking her captive, led her back ignominiously to her seat. Placing a hand upon each shoulder she said, "Kate Arlingford, look me in the eyes!"

Laughing and blushing, Kate shyly forced her soft black eyes to undergo Gertrude's scrutiny, just for an instant. But that instant was quite sufficient for Gertrude's purpose. Kneeling on the carpet by her side, she stole an arm around Kate's neck and caressed her and whispered congratulations after the tender fashion of women on such occasions.

Perhaps the thoughts of both were busy with a similar event that had occurred but a few weeks before, when Kate had refused to congratulate Gertrude: certainly Kate's thoughts were. But returning her cousin's caresses, she presently whispered, "Say, Gertrude!"

"Say, Katie!" replied that young lady.

"You won't flirt with him, will you?"

Whereat Gertrude laughed and said: "Flirt with him! I only hope he won't be too utterly wretched to speak to me."

And this was how it was that Mr. Langdon still received his orders from Washington.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"AND now, my dear," said the Countess de Beaugarde, "tell me of your *fiancé*, that happy Mr. Yates. Ah, you perceive I know all! Fortunate that he is. Is he tall or short? He is young, no? And he has riches? Eh, that is well. But tell me of him yourself." And settling herself comfortably in her chair, the cheery old lady folded her little white wrinkled hands, and with her head on one side, regarded Gertrude with much interest.

It was the day after their arrival in Paris. Mrs. Arlingford and Gertrude were seated with madame, whose guests they were, in her own especial room in the Hotel de Beaugarde. The moment that the countess had heard from her nephew, Major Arlingford, that his sister-in-law and her niece were about to visit Paris, she had urged them to make their home with her. "I am alone," she said in her letter to them, "and it will be the kindness to me if you come. And that lovely child, Gertrude! I remember her well, and am impatient to behold her once again. I beg of you not to refuse, but to accept my invitation, without ceremony."

And Mrs. Arlingford, glad to escape the discomforts of a French hotel, had accepted the invitation without ceremony. There was a sense of peace and rest in the old house, in which everything was solid and real. Life there, was in neutral tints, as though time had subdued it along with the cumbersome splendor of the fittings, the huge mirrors with their marvellous gilt frames, and the carvings and stucco of the time of Louis XVI. Dismal, Beaugarde called it; peaceful, Mrs. Arlingford found it.

When Gertrude came down to dinner the evening of their first day, the countess met her at the door of the drawing-room and taking both of her hands held her for a moment at arms' length, while she scanned her face. "Ah!" she said, "how beautiful it is to be young and lovely!" And then embracing her she whispered mysteriously: "He must be proud, truly. But," she continued, patting Gertrude on the shoulder, "I wish not to make you embarrassed, or to blush."

The truth of the matter was that Gertrude was not in the least embarrassed, nor did her cheeks show any sign of color. But it pleased the old lady to think that these appropriate symptoms were not wanting. She delighted in romance. Her own existence had been very commonplace. She had never had a love affair, not even with the man she had married. So that this young and pretty Gertrude who was going to marry the man she loved, formed a living romance which interested her greatly. She never doubted that Gertrude's was a veritable love affair. Women married only for love in that wonderful America, that delightful America, so at least Madame Arlingford, the major's wife, had told her. And the countess never doubted but that Gertrude's heart fluttered and her pulse quivered at each reference to her betrothed. How charming that was! And she could not refrain from striking these imaginary tender chords in the girl's nature, at every opportunity. She was devoured with impatience to hear all the details, what this love was like, how they had met, these lovers, what he had said and what Gertrude had replied. She understood that such matters were regulated very differently in America from what they were in France. She had been told that the American demoiselle was not only permitted to select the man she would marry, but was even allowed to meet him alone. It was even said that she went with him to the balls, the theatres, unattended! *Fi donc! C'est une chose inconcevable!* The countess did not believe that! In her secret heart she did not, in fact, approve of any of the American methods; she preferred the customs which had made her own life barren. But if the social manners in America were somewhat shocking, it made their description only the more interesting. And so at the first opportunity which etiquette granted her, the countess broached the subject.

She was destined, however, to meet with disappointment, for Gertrude not only failed to show any of those delicious signs of confusion, but actually seemed as indifferent as some young demoiselle whose husband had been chosen for her in the conventional French method.

"Now tell me of this happy Mr. Yates," said the countess, as they sat in her own private apartment; and she settled herself comfortably in her chair, and, with her head on one side, prepared to listen.

"But there is so little to tell," replied Gertrude, smiling.

"Ah!" said the countess, with an arch look, "that is, you will not make to me your confidence? But at the least, you will confess that he is handsome, no?"

Whereat Gertrude laughed and shook her head. "No," she said, "I don't think he is handsome."

"Is it that he is fair like you, or dark?"

"Well," said Gertrude, "he is more *brun* than *blond*; that is, his complexion is dark and his hair is dark."

"And his eyes?" said madame with great interest, "what color have they?"

"I think his eyes are gray; aren't they, auntie?" said Gertrude, turning toward that lady.

"But you do not know, yourself?" exclaimed madame, with comic amazement. "Incredible!"

Whereat Gertrude laughed, and then said apologetically. "Well, he has gray eyes, I know."

"Ah," said the countess, shaking her forefinger at Gertrude; "I see you make a pretence of ignorance. Tell me— But I weary you with my foolish questions, is it not so?"

"Not at all," said Gertrude, with eager frankness. "I will be only too happy to tell you all about him." Then arousing herself to a show of interest, she continued: "He is about thirty-five years old and is dark, with black hair and gray eyes."

"And he is tall," said the countess; "tall, with the grand air, like our dear Arthur?"

"No," replied Gertrude; "he is not as tall as my cousin Arthur."

"But he is too tall, that Arthur," said the countess, disparagingly. For there was that in Gertrude's reply which made her rebuke herself. "Undoubtedly this M. Yates is small," she said to herself. "Stupid that I am! And the dear child is sensitive about it!"

"Well," said Gertrude; "I can't think of anything else to tell you of him. You see I have known him all my life."

"Truly!" exclaimed the countess, as though that accounted satisfactorily for Gertrude's limited knowledge of the gentleman.

"Yes, indeed," replied Gertrude, "ever since I was a little child. He is my guardian, or trustee. Which is it, Aunt Mary?"

Mrs. Arlingford who had sat silently by, taking no part in this conversation, replied, "Trustee, my dear, the trustee of your fortune."

"Yes," said Gertrude, nodding her head: "that is it. He is the trustee of my fortune."

"Truly!" again said the countess. Then with a shade of disappointment in her tone, she continued, "Without doubt, then, this alliance has been arranged for you by your aunt, as is the custom in our country. Ah, my dear, that is best, after all. For who should be entrusted with so important a matter as a young girl's future, if not those who by reason of their affection and wisdom are most fit for that sacred duty?"

"But you are mistaken, dear madame," said Gertrude, smiling and shaking her head as she looked at her aunt. "My aunt did not arrange it. I arranged it all myself." And reaching out her hand with a smile she laid it on the withered fingers that were clasped in Mrs. Arlingford's lap.

"There is something here," said the countess to herself. "They do not wish to talk of the matter." And though the mystery enhanced her interest she was too well bred to pursue the subject. "I remember well when you were but a little child," she said, changing the subject, with tact; "when you and our dear Kate were with the good sisters of the *Sacré Cœur*, and you came to make me a visit on the afternoon of Saturdays. My son Henri, he would say to tease you, that you were his little wife. But you said, 'No, with grand indignation, you would marry no one but an American! So you see, you keep your word. And that is very well. My sister married an American, as you know. That is her picture I showed you last night. How much it is like our dear Kate, is it not? But I declare to you, when our young midshipman, Monsieur Arthur, came to me a few weeks ago, it was as though that tall gentleman from America had come once again to carry my sister across the seas. He is so like his grandfather, is that dear Arthur. Ah, he was a very handsome man, with the grand air!" And the countess straightened her back and held her head erect in illustration of Master Arthur's grandpapa.

"I am surprised that Arthur has not been here to see us," said Mrs. Arlingford, with an effort at conversation. "How long has he been in Paris, madame?"

"It makes now one month," replied the countess. "I had a great desire that he should come here to my house, for is he not the grandchild of my dear sister? His friend, too, Monsieur Dudley, he also would have been welcome. But he feared to inconvenience me, and my son tells me that it is more pleasant for them to have

apartments elsewhere. And so," said the countess, with a little sigh," "I do not see him often. But then, what will you?" she added, brightly. "He is a young man, and in Paris a young man has other occupations than talking to an old woman like me. My son, he is with him frequently, and he tells me, too, that Arthur devotes much of his time to his friend Monsieur Dudley. That poor young man has a severe malady of the lungs, which of late confines him to his bed. He is very fortunate to have so devoted a friend as Arthur, who makes the leap into the water at great hazard to save his life, and then nurses him so carefully."

At this point, Beaugarde himself appeared. "May I come in?" he said, gayly, holding aside the curtain which draped the doorway.

"Ah, my son, we have been talking of you," said the countess.

"I am greatly flattered," said Beaugarde, bowing to the ladies, while he tenderly raised his mother's hand to his lips.

"But there is no need," said that lady, "for it was I, your mother, alone, who talked of you."

"Then am I more flattered than ever," said her son, seating himself on an ottoman by her side.

"You see he practises his pretty speeches upon me," said the countess to Mrs. Arlingford, at the same time laying an affectionate hand on her son's shoulder, with a pleased look. "Have you seen our cousin Arthur, this morning?" she continued. "And why has he not been to pay his *devoirs* to madame, his aunt!"

"I am the bearer of a message from him," replied Beaugarde, addressing Mrs. Arlingford in French, for unlike his mother he was unable to sustain conversation in English. "I went with madame's friend, Monsieur Langdon, to tell our cousin Arthur that she and mademoiselle had arrived. I find him sitting in a chair smoking his cigar, and he tells me calmly that he has been sitting there all night. In fact, he had not been to bed for two nights. The doctor says that the little Dudley must not be left alone, so there he sits, our good friend Arthur. I say to him, 'But why do you not hire a nurse?' But no, he will not."

"Is Mr. Dudley so very ill?" asked Gertrude.

"*Ma foi!* yes," said Beaugarde, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "He has had the hemorrhage of the lungs, and that is the danger. He must not be left alone, and so I, myself, go to sit with him this evening, and Monsieur Arthur presents his com-

pliments to madame his aunt, and will have the honor to call upon her and mademoiselle at eight o'clock."

From all of which it will be seen that Monsieur de Beaugarde had not failed to act the part of a friend to Monsieur Arthur, and that while much was said of his constancy at the bedside of his sick friend, nothing had been said of midnight suppers, of *écarté*, *trente et quarante*, and *roulette*, nothing had been said of *la belle Cleopatre*. So true it is that one may tell the truth and not shame the devil.

"We shall be very glad to see Arthur," replied Mrs. Arlingford. "I am sorry that his friend is so sick, and it is very kind of you, monsieur, to go to so much trouble on his account."

"Ah, not at all, madame, not at all," replied Beaugarde; "on the contrary, I assure you, it is a pleasure."

"But, auntie, dear," here interposed Gertrude quietly, "did I not understand you to say that you had accepted Mrs. Bellew's invitation for to-night?"

"Yes, that is true," said Mrs. Arlingford, looking at Gertrude, doubtfully, "so I did. I am afraid we shall have to ask Arthur to defer his visit until to-morrow," she continued. "I am very sorry, too."

"It is unfortunate," said Beaugarde. "However, if madame desires, I will myself see Arthur and explain the matter to him."

After the usual regrets and protestations, it was so arranged. This, the kind reader will remember, was the night appointed by Mrs. Merrin for her meeting with Arthur at the ball. It will further be remembered that Beaugarde afterward discovered that he also had an engagement, and that he accordingly contented himself with sending Arthur a note, which the latter did not receive until it was too late for him to arrange matters to suit his own convenience.

Now there was no reason why Arthur should not have made his visit to his aunt that evening. There was ample time for him to pay his respects before the ladies' departure, a fact which every one present understood quite well. Therefore it was that both the countess and her son construed Gertrude's remark as an intimation to her cousin that she did not desire to see him. Monsieur de Beaugarde whispered to himself, "She has heard of our friend Arthur's little affair, and she will not receive him. Aha!" While the countess, remembering Arthur's manner when she had informed him some six weeks before, that his aunt and cousin

were coming to Paris, his regret that he would not be able to remain to see them, his reticence about Gertrude's engagement, and his noticeable constraint when conversing about them, said to herself, with the air of one making a discovery, "Ah! Is it because of our brave, handsome cousin, that mademoiselle forgets the color of her *fiance's* eyes?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

IT will be remembered that it was on the day following the events narrated in the last chapter, that Paris was served with the scandal of Mrs. Merrin's elopement. In the American colony, the news was received with an indignant cry of "Did I not tell you so?" If, as La Rochefoucauld says, we feel a certain satisfaction in the misfortunes of our best friends, the disasters which befall those who have scorned our advice and predictions are not less gratifying. For does it not prove the superiority of our own morality, of our wisdom? Was not our warning unheeded and advice flouted? And now, behold, how true was our judgment! Nay, more, does it not prove the purity of our motives, which some light-minded people saw fit to question? It was not envy of this wretched woman's superb dresses, nor jealousy of the homage she received, that called forth our denunciations; it was simply a regard for her body and soul. Although, for that matter, her dressing was not so very admirable. Any woman with a complexion like hers, who would wear orange—well! The men she associated with might like it, but we know what kind of men *they* were!

"Have you heard?" said the Countess de Beaugarde to Mrs. Arlingford. "Have you heard of this affair of your countrywoman, this scandal? Ah, I feel very sad, myself, when I hear of such things."

"Of whom do you speak, madame?" said Mrs. Arlingford.

"Pardon me," said the countess, as she glanced at Gertrude, who sat in another part of the room, reading. "I thought you were informed of it. It is of this Madame Merrin. And you have not heard?"

At the sound of that name Gertrude suddenly raised her head from the book which gave her a pretext for not talking. Mrs. Merrin! She had forgotten that she was in Paris. And now what of her? Every nerve in her body was on the alert, as she

heard her aunt say, in her usual placid tone, "No, we have not heard. What of her?" Yes, quick! What of her?

"She has abandoned her husband," said the countess. "She has eloped."

"Eloped!" said Mrs. Arlingford, severely. "I wonder if that can be the same woman who was at Newport last year. A dark, rather handsome person. I remember that she created a great deal of talk by the way she encouraged the promiscuous attentions of men. I expect it is the same one. Whom did she elope with, madame?"

And Gertrude, with the blood stagnant in her veins and her breath suspended, listened to her aunt's mild surprise as one may listen, after the lightning's flash, to the patter of the rain, ere the crash of the thunder comes. Was it Arthur? Absurd! How could it be:

"She has eloped with a Monsieur,—you know him not, Monsieur le Comte de Carambole," replied the countess. "Ah, he is a bad man, the Comte de Carambole, a *roué*. I knew his father; he was the same. Soon he will grow weary, he will leave her, and then"—a shrug of the countess' shoulder left nothing more to be said.

At the mention of that unknown name, the blood once more coursed through Gertrude's veins, sending a warm flush to the roots of her hair, and bringing with it an unmistakeable sensation of joy. Leaving her seat, she stood in the shade of the heavy window curtains, out of hearing of her aunt and the countess. She had heard enough. This woman who had been so shameless had at last betrayed her real character to the world. She was glad of it. For a few moments, in the tumult of her emotions, she did not ask herself why. She tried to think that it was for the sake of justice.

Then, after a while, she faced the truth. She was glad because a radiant doubt had entered her mind, a doubt whether Arthur had ever had any affection for Mrs. Merrin. That Mrs. Merrin had had some sort of claim upon Arthur she could not doubt, but that he had loved her or even cared for her she did now begin to doubt, otherwise would she have eloped with another man? No, never! In the light of this reasoning all the well-remembered incidents in which Mrs. Merrin had figured, changed their appearance. That night at the Carleton ball when she had, with an impertinent glance at her, Gertrude, claimed Arthur for a dance,

he had not looked pleased; on the contrary, his manner had instantly become cold and reserved. At Newport, too, though he had remained by Mrs. Merrin's side, his expression had not indicated satisfaction; he had not danced with her, while the glances Mrs. Merrin had cast at Gertrude betrayed that she was taking a malicious triumph in retaining him. And Gertrude restlessly paced the floor in excitement, as this line of argument unfolded itself. As for the assertion in the anonymous letter that Arthur was very attentive to Mrs. Merrin in Naples, was not that disproved by the fact that here, in Paris, he was devoting himself exclusively to nursing his sick friend, while she was receiving the shameful attentions of this Frenchman? Might not that letter have been written by some equally malicious person? Stop! Might it not have been written by Mrs. Merrin herself? It was of a piece with the rest of her conduct! The note was in a woman's hand! It was postmarked Paris! Conviction followed on the thought. Of course it was written by Mrs. Merrin! Why had she never thought of that before?

With a heart lighter than it had been since the terrible day on which she had received that letter, Gertrude stood transfixed in the middle of the room, with her hands clasped, her lips half parted, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes sparkling. This, then, was the secret of it all! But what could have been Mrs. Merrin's motive for such a malicious act? What had she, Gertrude, done to incur such bitter enmity? There could be but one answer, Mrs. Merrin must have desired to create a breach between them. But why?—gradually a smile lit up Gertrude's face, her eyes sought the floor, and the color in her face deepened. Alas for Mr. Yates!

Having once admitted a doubt, Gertrude threw the door wide open to conviction. Arthur stood before her absolved. She even tried to make atonement for the wrong she had done him, and, clothing his figure in the very whitest garments of innocence, she refused to consider the nature of the bond between him and Mrs. Merrin, which had controlled his actions. She was as quick now to free him from all suspicion as she had been before to condemn him. Nor was she inconsistent. She had found him guilty because she loved him, and she now found him innocent for the same reason.

But Arthur did not come to reap the benefit of his absolution. Neither that day, nor the next, nor the next. Gertrude heard of

him frequently, for Monsieur de Beaugarde, who had grown surprisingly filial lately and called to see his mother once, twice, and sometimes three times during the twenty-four hours, had always a word to say of Arthur, and always that word was that he was in attendance on Monsieur Dudley. But Mr. Dudley was not so ill now that Arthur could not leave him. Why did he not come? Was he offended because they had postponed his first visit? With her heart filled with a desire to make reparation, to re-establish their footing, once more, as old friends—nothing more, Gertrude suggested to her aunt one morning when they were riding alone in the Beaugarde carriage, that propriety demanded that they should take some little notice of Arthur and his sick friend. To this Mrs. Arlingford readily agreed, as she agreed in these latter days to anything that Gertrude suggested. This first courteous visit of inquiry resulted, as the reader knows, in the invalid being carried off for a drive, and afterwards in Arthur himself being one of the party.

The day that Arthur called on them to acknowledge these courtesies, Gertrude happened to be out shopping with some friends, and her aunt had seen him alone. When, within the week, their carriage had stopped at Arthur's rooms to take Dudley to the Bois, Arthur, after placing the invalid in the carriage, had pleaded an engagement in reply to his aunt's invitation to join them, and begged to be excused, and so they had driven off without him. This had angered Gertrude. She had come to him filled with gracious kindly feelings of their old-time friendship, and he had not responded in a becoming spirit, he had rejected her advances. Well, one thing was certain, he would not have another opportunity. And, during that second ride, although she forced herself to talk to Dudley, the changing color, the sparkling eyes, and the animation she had displayed on the previous occasion were absent.

A week afterward, Arthur and Dudley had left the city. As Gertrude stood in the hall after her return from making some visits, and received their P. P. C. cards from the footman, all the light and life of the place seemed suddenly quenched, leaving her alone and lonely, with no object in being in Paris or anywhere else.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IT had been Mrs. Arlingford's intention, when planning this visit to Europe, to remain a week in London, about three weeks in Paris, and then to spend a couple of months travelling in Italy and Switzerland. Her object in making what was, at this time of the year, a long stay in Paris, was to consult a physician, an eminent specialist, in regard to her prolonged illness.

Since her husband's death Mrs. Arlingford's symptoms were not particularly distressing and certainly not alarming. And her physician while talking with apparent frankness was careful not to frighten her by dwelling too seriously on the subject, deceiving her, in fact, as to the dangerous nature of the malady he suspected. Mrs. Arlingford not only permitted herself to be deceived, but in her own mind arrived at the conclusion that she was suffering from some slight affection of the lungs, which, with care, would pass away. After the nervous prostration resulting from her final interview with Mr. Yates, however, Mrs. Arlingford became alarmed about herself, and again summoned her physician. An elaborate examination convinced him that his first apprehensions were well founded, and that the unfortunate lady was affected with incipient aneurism. Feeling it to be a matter of duty, he revealed to her, with much precaution and delicacy, the nature of the malady and its probable result. She bore the disclosure with firmness, but eagerly assented to the doctor's suggestion that she should go abroad and consult a celebrated French physician, conceiving the most sanguine hopes as to his ability and skill. The mere fact of his being a foreigner, and of her having to go abroad to consult him, brought with it an assurance of relief. At the same time, like many people who carry the seeds of a fatal disease, Mrs. Arlingford was averse to having her real condition known. She dreaded the sympathetic pressure of friendly hands, and the condoling gaze of acquaintances. And so the doctor, humoring his patient, helped her to conceal not only from Gertrude, but from most of her relatives, the nature of her illness,

and gave his advice in regard to the sea voyage in such an apparently unpremeditated way, as to avoid suspicion of having any other object in view than the cure of a slight indisposition by change of scene and air. Cheered and encouraged by the prospect, Mrs. Arlingford's spirits arose with the arrangements for the voyage, and she arrived in Paris prepared for the announcement that she had allowed herself to become unnecessarily frightened. Unfortunately for these hopes, the French physician could do no more than confirm the opinion expressed by his Washington colleague, and being a busy man, his decision was brief and bare of those comforting assurances with which the old family physician had clothed his announcement. Was it advisable for madame and her niece to continue their travels on the continent? N-no, he thought not. While madame's malady was not necessarily fatal, it was better not to take chances. Nature sometimes of its own volition repaired the mischief which had occurred, but, to enable nature to do this, quiet and the comforts of home were indispensable.

So, then! It was as bad as that. She must not continue her travels, lest she leave Gertrude alone in a strange country, under distressing conditions. And Mrs. Arlingford departed from the doctor's presence looking ten years older than when she had entered it. On her way back to the Hotel de Beaugarde, the recollection that but a few months before she had prayed that she might die, obtruded itself upon her mind. But now, in the light of the tragic possibility, the recollection, instead of comforting her, seemed to mock her.

Even her husband's name and Gertrude's sacrifice and unhappy prospects paled before this drama, wherein she, herself, must enact the principal part. For two days she was frightened, silent, and unsympathetic. Then she slowly began to regain her disturbed equanimity. She began to reason with herself. Why should not she at sixty-three years of age, be ready to go, especially when her death would enable her to reimburse Mr. Yates, right the wrong done by her husband, and shield his name without peradventure; and at least help to right the wrong she was doing Gertrude? The more she meditated, the better she became accustomed to the prospect, until she was almost reconciled. Almost, because she herself was not aware that, as the grim verdict of the French physician became softened by time, her resignation partook largely of reawakened hope. Had he not said that

nature might repair the damage done? If it was not for Gertrude—ah! It would have been better for Gertrude if she had died two years ago, she told herself. But would even her death indubitably free her from these toils? The money inherited from her father, of which she could touch only the interest, she could devise to whom she pleased, but would the payment of Gertrude's misappropriated fortune dissolve her compact with Mr. Yates? No, he had fulfilled his promise; if she violated hers in an attempt, even after her death, to frustrate his hopes, he would be at liberty to publish her husband's dishonor to the world. So she reasoned and pleaded with herself.

In any event it was necessary for her to tell Gertrude of her changed plans in regard to their future movements. She had procrastinated from day to day, until she felt she could no longer encroach upon the Comtesse de Beaugarde's hospitality. Should she tell her the truth about her illness? She shrank from making the disclosure. She shrank from the alarm, the sympathy which would follow. But it would be better to tell her the truth. And so one day, it was about two weeks after Arthur's departure, Mrs. Arlingford made the disclosure to Gertrude, not to its full extent, but sufficiently to warrant the proposition of their return. For, as she saw the color leaving Gertrude's face and the alarm coming into her eyes, she gradually belittled the gravity of the situation and exaggerated its hopefulness. But it was useless, for Gertrude, sinking to her knees, clasped her fingers in her aunt's lap, and, looking up at her through frightened eyes, exclaimed, "O auntie, dear, for God's sake, don't *you* leave me!" And then hiding her face in her hands, gave way to tears.

Mrs. Arlingford was greatly distressed and surprised. Surprised, because, although she had anticipated some show of sorrow and anxiety, such a passionate outburst as this seemed scarcely warranted by her guarded confession. While she was touched by the depth of affection it betrayed, Gertrude's despair was rather depressing. In fact, it irritated her; one would think, from the girl's manner, that she was going to die immediately. Laying her wrinkled hands on the golden head bowed in her lap, she tried to reason with Gertrude, but all to no purpose. "If you die, I want to die, too!" sobbed Gertrude. "I don't want to be left all alone."

"But, my darling, you will not be left all alone; you will have many to love you and care for you, even if I should go." Then,

as Gertrude shook her head, she continued, "Besides, you exaggerate the danger. The doctor says I may live for years, and I may even recover. There, there, my dear!" And, drawing Gertrude to her bosom, she petted and soothed her in her hesitating, unaccustomed way. "There, there!" she said, "don't cry any more, there's a good girl! You distress me so."

Gertrude arose, and, drying her eyes, looked at her aunt with a brave smile, and said, "I don't know what makes me such a baby. I don't believe there is any more danger of your dying than there is of me. I never saw you look better. I won't be so silly again."

"And you won't be disappointed if we give up the trip to Italy and return home?" said Mrs. Arlingford.

"No, indeed," said Gertrude, "I think I would rather return home."

What had she to remain for? She had looked forward to seeing Arthur, to renewing, may be, their old friendship; and he had gone, gone without one kind word; gone, almost it seemed, because she had come. What was Paris to her, or Italy? What was any place to her? No, she would rather return home, return home and marry the man to whom she was engaged. There was something in the desperate, irrevocable nature of this proceeding that alone seemed to promise relief. She longed to be taken from herself, changed into another woman. Would not her marriage do that for her? When the minister of the gospel pronounced the mystical formula which made her a wife, would not a change take place in her, bringing with it all the requirements necessary for the proper fulfilment of the new and sacred character? Yes, without doubt, and with it would come peace and rest.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IT was with a shower of protest that the Comtesse de Beaugarde received her guest's intimation of approaching departure. She declared herself prostrated by their determination, just as they had become indispensable to her happiness. And that dear Gertrude, too! In truth the amiable little woman had become very fond of Gertrude, notwithstanding the failure of her romance. At the same time her regret was not unalloyed. Monsieur le Vicomte, her son, had also become an evident admirer of Gertrude, and showed an alarming disposition to manufacture a little romance of his own. Madame loved and admired the beautiful young American, but she could not with equanimity regard her as a daughter-in-law. True the countess' sister had married an American gentleman, but that was another thing from the heir of the house of Beaugarde marrying beneath his station. That made her tremble! She never for a moment doubted Monsieur Henri's ability to supplant "*ce petit Monsieur* Yetts." And so, though it was with sorrow that she saw her guests depart, the countess was not inconsolable.

As for Beaugarde himself, he did not consider it necessary or desirable to make a confidante of his mother on his return from Havre, whither he had accompanied the ladies. In fact his mother saw very little of him during the next six months. He became once more a familiar figure on the boulevard and in the foyer of the opera, while the number of cigarettes he consumed was remarkable. At the end of that time, showing a disposition to moralize over the vanity of champagne *frappé* and young women with abbreviated names and reputations, his mother took advantage of his mood to arrange for him an alliance with a young lady of his own station, whom within a year he married.

It was with real regret that Gertrude took her leave of Arthur's friend and cousin after their arrival at Havre. Beaugarde had thoughtfully secured for her and her aunt a stateroom on the upper deck, and to this retreat Gertrude now betook herself.

Quickly abandoning her dispirited attempt at preparing the room for the voyage, she gave herself up to melancholy thoughts. Her aunt's illness, her own approaching loveless marriage, brooded darkly in her heart, and she found little relief in the tears which overflowed her eyes.

At last she sought the side of the steamer and listlessly watched the busy crowd of sailors, dock hands, emigrants and cabin passengers thronging the ship and wharf, jostling each other and adding to the din of creaking tackles, ringing bells, and whistles, by their bawling and chattering, laughing and crying. A burst of music from a band on shore broke in upon her dejected musing with a jarring sound, and by some untraceable connection filled her breast with a sudden foreboding of disaster. The din increased, orders followed, and the sailors rushed hither and thither throwing ropes around and hustling the emigrants about with little ceremony. Slowly the tears fell from Gertrude's eyes and she drew down her veil to hide her emotion. The few, last, tardy passengers hurried along the gang plank, and then—then her heart seemed to stop beating, for there among them was Arthur Arlingford! Could it be possible or had her fancy conjured up the image to delude her eyes? With a quick movement she raised her veil and gazed breathlessly into the crowd. Yes, it was Arthur, and there was Dudley, just behind him, and with them an elderly lady dressed in black, whom she recognized as Mrs. Dudley. In an instant memory recalled the fact that Dudley had told her he was expecting his mother. Evidently she had come and was taking him home. This was the explanation. But Arthur? Was he going too? Her heart beat wildly at the thought. But, no, that was impossible, for he had said that he intended to rejoin his ship. He had only come to Havre to see them off, that was all. Of course, that was all. And this she kept repeating to herself, to quell the tumult in her heart. Then as the little party descended into the cabin and Arthur did not immediately return, her agitation increased. Could he be going after all! Oh, if the ship would only leave now! She did not pause to think or reason with herself. Duty, responsibility, moral obligations, all were swept away in the sudden rush of feeling. If he only might be on the ship with her during this voyage that she had so dreaded, just that and no more. His presence brought such comfort and safety. The preparations for departure which before had outstripped her wishes, could not now keep pace with

her desire. Her fingers moved nervously in unison with the work about her. If she could have lent her feeble aid to haul upon the ropes she would have given her dainty hands to the labor. Suddenly her heart sank, for Arthur had reappeared on deck. Sauntering leisurely to the side of the ship, he paused very near her, and drawing his travelling cap down over his eyes, he stood with his hands in his pockets, staring at the shore. Evidently he had no intention of returning to it. He was her fellow-passenger.

A great sense of peace and happiness filled Gertrude's heart like a flood of sunshine, replacing with warmth and light the coldness and darkness that had chilled her spirit a moment ago. She leaned back in her chair with a delightful feeling of perfect rest and contentment. As she idly watched him with happy assurance, Arthur turned away with a sigh, which found an echo in her breast. Then as he was about to resume his walk, his eyes met hers. He started, and with a swift change of expression exclaimed: "*You! You here!*"

"Yes," said Gertrude, "I am here." And then, slowly extending her hand, she added: "Are you glad?"

She intended the words to be a commonplace renewal of their old intimate tone of friendship.

He took the little white hand in his broad palm and looked down at it for a few seconds. Finally raising his eyes he let them meet hers. At first she returned his gaze, frankly, then the color left her face, and she withdrew her hand.

She had her answer.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"It's funny, isn't it?" said Curley, glancing up from the kite he was making.

"What is funny?" said Gertrude.

"Why, that we should happen to get on the same ship," replied Curley.

"I don't see anything very funny about it," said Gertrude. "Aren't you putting on too much tail for such a little kite?"

It was the third day out. A warm summer day, with the blue sky above and the blue water beneath, and between, the bright, sunny deck, blotched with bits of color here and there where ladies reclined in their steamer chairs, reading, flirting in an indolent way, or gazing out over the water, while the men leaned over their chairs or sat at their feet, assisting in these different occupations, or varied the monotony by pacing the deck amidships, smoking and chatting among themselves. The process of social crystallization, aided by fine weather and a smooth sea, was progressing rapidly, forming a miniature world afloat. Affinities were found or created, and before two suns had set, life, for all temporary purposes, seemed never to have been passed in any other way than in a ship.

During the remainder of that first day of his unexpected meeting with Gertrude, Arthur had bestowed upon his aunt and cousin that care and attention which the circumstances demanded. In a dozen little ways he utilized his seafaring experience to increase their comfort. But while his thoughtfulness for them betrayed to the acute observer a certain tenderness, his manner was studiously grave and constrained. He made no attempt to win Gertrude's confidence or companionship. On the contrary, he refrained from utilizing opportunities to renew their intimacy, and after attending to her wants in the way of chairs, cushions, wraps and the like withdrew to his own solitary pastimes. Gertrude, on the other hand, had never seemed so light-hearted. She was like the spirit of the summer day. The bright, blue sky was reflected in her eyes, the liquid sound of the plashing waters was echoed in her

laugh, the sunshine hid in her golden hair, while the warm breeze lifted and stirred the stray locks as though jealously hunting the intruder out; while all of the elements together were not more reckless or shifting in their moods than she, or more fascinating in their very capriciousness. Apparently disregarding Arthur's proximity, she was quite content with watching her fellow voyagers and the ship's crew, with an occasional glance at a book. Then she made an exception of Dudley, for he, like Arthur had refrained at first from seeking her society. But unlike Arthur, on the second day he was not permitted to further indulge his humor. Gertrude's mood had no respect for any one else's vagaries. She knew quite well that it was his boyish love for her that made Curley shy and reserved, but she did not choose to have him love her just then; she wanted him to amuse her. And so, calmly disregarding his feelings, on the morning of the third day out she summoned him to her side with a little imperious gesture. Making him sit down beside her on the steamer chair, she said,

"What have I done to offend you?"

"You have not offended me," replied Curley, blushing like a girl, and playing in an embarrassed way with his watch chain.

"Then why don't you come and talk to me? Why do you avoid me?"

No answer.

Laying her hand upon his arm and leaning forward to catch his eyes, she said imperatively, "Look at me!"

Reluctantly, Curley raised his big brown eyes to hers.

"You are a foolish boy!" she said, with a certain tenderness. "It is not kind of you," she added, reproachfully. Then followed a pause, during which poor Dudley drew a long breath and became uneasy. "I am lonely," she continued, "and I want you to talk to me." Then, suddenly changing her manner, she called him by his nickname, saying in a pleading tone, "Say, Curley, won't you come and play with me?"

As she laughed, Curley, catching the infection, laughed too, at the same time answering resignedly, "Yes, if you want me to."

"That's a good boy," she replied. "I do want you. I have been so awfully lonely, and you wouldn't even look at me."

"No, I know I wouldn't," said Curley, with a little catch in his breath. "What shall we play?"

"Let us make a kite!" said Gertrude, with enthusiasm. "All day yesterday I thought how lovely it would be to fly a white kite away

up in that blue sky. I asked the old sailor over there, if the passengers ever flied or flew, or whatever it is, a kite, and he touched his hat and said, 'Yes, my lady,' and then afterwards he came and told me he would get me some small stuff if I liked. But I did not know what small stuff was, or whether I liked it or not, and so I told him that I did not care about any, just then; some other day I would like a little. What is small stuff?"

"String," said Curley.

"Oh," said Gertrude. "Let us get him to give it to us now."

Then, at Gertrude's instigation, by begging and bribing, Dudley succeeded in collecting the necessary material; and choosing a secluded spot, the two proceeded with the building of the kite. At least, Curley did the building and Gertrude the criticising.

"Nevertheless, I think it was funny," resumed Curley, after the size of the kite's tail had been freely discussed; "or perhaps strange would be a better word. I think it is strange that we should all happen to go home together on the same ship."

"I am not a sailor like you," replied Gertrude, "but it does not seem to me that we could very well have gone home together on different ships; now, could we?"

Whereat Curley looked at her admiringly and continued, "Do you know, I never was so taken aback in all my life as when Arley told me that you were aboard. I thought that you were going to spend two or three months in Europe."

"So we were," said Gertrude, sadly, "but my aunt's health is not very good and so we decided to return."

"I suppose Arthur told you of our getting orders to return to Carleton for examination for promotion."

"Yes," said Gertrude, "that is, I heard him tell Aunt Mary."

"We had just got settled in a lovely little spot in the south of France, where you could get very good beer. And mother had arrived and we were all going to housekeeping, when the orders came. I need not have gone, because I was on sick leave. But Arley had to go, and mother was anxious to have me back at home and so," he concluded with a sigh, "here we are."

"Are you going to be promoted too?" asked Gertrude.

"I am afraid not," said Curley, "I don't believe I can pass the physical examination."

"You mean that they won't promote you because you are

sick?" And then, as he nodded his head, she continued energetically, "But that is not right! You lost your health because you were doing your duty. They ought to promote you just for that very reason!"

"I wish you were the honorable secretary," said Curley.

"I wish I was," replied Gertrude, emphatically, "just for a day. But, tell me, if they don't promote you, what will they do?"

"Well, probably they will give me a year to recover in, and then if I am not well enough, they will retire me."

"What is that?" said Gertrude.

"Half or three-quarters pay and nothing to do."

"Would you like that?" said Gertrude.

"No," said Curley, shaking his head. "To be laid on the shelf, just as I am starting out, is pretty hard."

"Of course it is!" exclaimed Gertrude, sympathetically. "But then," she added, brightly, "you won't be. I am quite sure that you will be well in less than a year. Why, you look ever so much better now than when I first saw you."

"Oh," he said, with assumed carelessness, "I've no doubt I shall pull through all right. What great friends your aunt and my mother have become," he continued, changing the subject, and glancing at the two elderly ladies who were sitting together at a little distance, engaged in earnest conversation.

"Yes," said Gertrude, "it is so pleasant for Aunt Mary to have a companion. I am glad that it all happened as it did."

"Are you?" said Curley looking up at her.

"Yes," said Gertrude, "on auntie's account."

"Oh!" said Curley. "There," he continued, holding up the kite, "I think that is enough tail."

"I still think it is too long," said Gertrude.

"Well," said Curley, who despite his resolution to the contrary, was happy in this enforced companionship, "you see it is a French kite and it is proper that it should leave its tail Toulon."

"And that the paper up here should be Toulouse!" replied Gertrude.

"Exactly," said Curley. "I tell you what, we are pretty bright, aren't we?"

"Indeed we are," said Gertrude. "Where shall we fly it? I hope it will go up all right. Everybody is looking at us, and it would be dreadful to make a failure of it."

"I wonder why Arley doesn't lend us a hand instead of standing over there talking to that old pelican. If I could catch his eye I will call him over."

"No, don't!" said Gertrude, quickly. And then she added, "He will think we don't know how to fly a kite, and we do."

"The wind is ahead—what little we have," said Curley, "and we can send it up from here very easily."

As they arose, they were joined by other idlers, their attempt at flying a kite, as soon as it was observed, exciting that general interest which at sea attaches to the slightest incident. But although most of the passengers on deck abandoned their various occupations to witness their venture, Arthur was among those who did not move. He continued conversing with the old lady whom Curley had flippantly designated a pelican, although he saw very well what was going forward. In fact, there had not been a movement of Gertrude's since he had been aboard, that escaped him; not even a smile or a glance. But he made no sign. He had learned his lesson. He did not intend that Fate should find it necessary to repeat it. By what strange chance he was forced into a ten days' ship-board intimacy with Gertrude, he could not understand; but he would show that he was strong enough, if occasion demanded. She was not for him, and after that one glance surprised from him he withdrew within himself. He was not going to hang whining around the gates of Paradise like a beggar only to see another man enter in and take possession at the end of ten days. Not he. And so, if Gertrude wished to fly kites let some one else ballast them.

The kite was launched from the ship's side; for a moment it arose swiftly into the blue ether and then describing a number of fantastic curves like a living thing struggling to get free, it finally swooped down into the water. A chorus of derisive and sympathetic exclamations greeted this result, followed by explanations of the cause of the failure and advice on kite-making generally.

"Shall we try again?" said Curley laughingly.

But Gertrude shook her head and replied, "No, I'm tired of the kite. Let some one else try."

Relinquishing what was left of the paraphernalia to an enthusiast, they sought another part of the deck.

"Now, what shall we do?" said Curley.

"I don't know," said Gertrude. "I wish I could climb up

there," she continued, looking up at the tall masts; "it must be lovely away up at the top."

"I am afraid it would hardly do," said Curley, picking up a bit of rope yarn from the deck.

"I suppose not," said Gertrude with a sigh.

"What is that you are making?"

"That?" said Curley. "That is a Tom Fool's knot."

"Show me how," said Gertrude. Then, after sundry vain attempts, she gave it up. "I am stupid; I can't make it," she said, impatiently. "How do you make a true lover's knot?"

"This way," said Curley, making that traditional emblem. "There. Now, if a sailor wants to know if his girl will have him, he sends her a ribbon with the knot apart, this way. If she loves him, she draws the knots together and sends it back. And then he is happy."

"It takes very little to make a sailor happy," said Gertrude. "She ought to send him a Tom Fool's knot. How dreadfully warm it is!"

"It is pretty warm," assented Curley. "How nice it would be to take a plunge over the side."

"Oh, wouldn't it!" exclaimed Gertrude, enthusiastically. "If we only had bathing suits."

"I am afraid the captain would not wait for us," said Curley, "and then we should get left."

"How tiresome you are to object to everything I suggest," replied Gertrude, "I wonder if it is not near lunch time," she continued, consulting her watch. "The morning is so long!"

Curley made no reply, and she leaned back idly in her chair with her eyes far away, looking very lovely in a morning costume which seemed expressly adapted to its surroundings.

"What have you been reading?" he said presently, taking up the book that lay on the deck beside her chair; "Tennyson?"

"I have not been reading," she said. "I am not in the humor. Let us take a walk. Shall we?"

As they slowly paced the deck, she continued, "Do you think we shall have a quick passage?"

"It is hard to tell," said Curley. "At this time of the year we certainly ought to have fair weather, even if the wind is not in our favor."

"Is the wind in our favor now?" asked Gertrude.

"No," said Curley, "it has been a head wind all the morning, but it is light."

"I wish it would storm," said Gertrude.

"You do!" said Curley. "That is a nice wish. What do you want it to storm for?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Gertrude, impatiently. "Didn't you ever feel as though you would like to see things all broken up?"

"Well," said Curley, reflectively, "I have sometimes felt a desire to smash things, but only under certain circumstances. I have never felt like interfering with a fair breeze or sunshine."

"I am sick of the sunshine," said Gertrude wilfully. "I want a storm."

"Oh, very well," said Curley. "I will ask the steward to bring you one."

At which Gertrude laughed. Finally she stopped at the little group formed by Mrs. Dudley, Mrs. Arlingford and Arthur, and leaned on the back of her aunt's chair.

"What amuses you, my dear?" said Mrs. Arlingford, trying unsuccessfully to look up into her face.

"Mr. Dudley," said Gertrude.

"She wants the moon," explained Curley.

"No, I don't," said Gertrude. "I want a storm."

"I should not wonder if you got one," said Arthur, looking at her.

"Do you think so?" she said, letting her eyes fall; and then slipping her arm around her aunt's neck, she lowered her head with the pretext of asking her some trivial question.

"Do you really think we are going to have a storm, Arthur?" asked Mrs. Dudley, anxiously.

"Scarcely a storm," he answered. "It looks a little misty over there, but it is more likely to be rain than anything else."

"Oh, I hope we shan't have bad weather," said Mrs. Dudley, looking with concern at her son.

"For my part," said that young gentleman, airily, "I think a storm would be rather a pleasant change."

"Yes?" said Gertrude, looking at him with saucy inquiry.

"It won't amount to anything," said Arthur reassuringly. "It is not the time of year for gales, in this latitude."

"Oh, I say," said Curley, reproachfully, "you have been cramming 'The Law of Storms.' Now, that isn't fair."

Later in the afternoon, Arthur's prophecy was partly fulfilled.

The sky became overcast and a damp, chilly wind sprang up from the northwest, changing the warm blue of the water into a cold gray, and ruffling it here and there into patches of curling foam. By nightfall, the motion of the steamer had perceptibly increased, and the fair-weather passengers, among whom were Mrs. Dudley and Mrs. Arlingford, had sought their berths. The following day was sombre, with a dull gray canopy overhead and a dark, leaden sea beneath. The chairs on deck were empty and uninviting, while the few passengers who appeared did not remain long. Arthur alone, of all his party, seemed indifferent to the weather. He stayed on deck all day, smoking and tramping to and fro with a persistence characteristic of the sailor. Dudley was compelled to remain below, the cold dampness making him cough each time that, despite his mother's entreaties, he wilfully braved the open air. Gertrude was forced to stay with her aunt and Mrs. Dudley. Under any circumstances she disliked the cabin, for, with her dread of the sea, the sense of being confined between decks made her nervous. Out in the open air, she could at least see what was happening, and to that end she was content to brave the most boisterous winds and waves. In her present humor, this constraint was doubly irksome to her. She would play backgammon with her aunt or read to her and Mrs. Dudley, until she became nervous enough to cry aloud. But although the first of these rough weather days served her with pretexts enough to go on deck, she resolutely refrained from availing herself of any of them. The second morning, however, as Arthur turned in his walk, he saw a slight gray figure emerge upon the unsteady deck and stand hesitating a moment as it was blown by the wind. Instantly he was by her side, and as she took his strong arm, Gertrude said something about a book she wanted out of her state-room. The book was procured, and then, of course, there was nothing for Arthur to do but to insist on her taking a little walk. And in this, their first conversation, an hour sped by unnoticed.

After that, Gertrude refused all other invitations to walk, and refraining from again going on deck alone, she voluntarily imprisoned herself for the rest of the day. The next morning, Arthur reproached himself with his selfishness in not offering her his services, knowing how well she loved the open air. Heroically determining that come what might to him, her pleasure should not suffer, he sought her in the cabin and urged her to

come on deck for exercise. Her acceptance of his invitation confirmed him in this course.

"I hope," he said, "that it is unnecessary for me to tell you that whenever you want to walk on deck, I am entirely at your disposal. At least, I can offer you a steady arm and I am only too glad to be of the slightest use to you. In fact, it is a pleasure to encourage such a good rough-weather sailor."

"I always was a pretty good sailor," she said, well pleased. "But, all the same, I don't like the sea."

"No," he replied, "I know you don't. You never did. Though you told me that night, when we were on the yacht going up to Newport, that you did not mind stormy weather; it was on the still nights when you looked over the side into the black water, that you were afraid."

"Do you remember all that?" she said, looking up at him curiously.

He answered, with a little laugh, "Yes, I remember all that."

"Do you know," she continued, after a pause, "Aunt Mary and I were so glad when we knew you were going on the same ship with us. We were such cowards, and I dreaded the voyage back all alone. I felt almost superstitious about it. But now I don't. At night, coming over, I used to be afraid to go to sleep sometimes, lest something should happen; but now, if I get nervous, I think of you being on deck, for you always are, you know. See what confidence we have in your sailor qualities," she added, with a smile. Then as Arthur remained silent, she continued, "Why do you stay on deck so much? Don't you ever go to sleep?"

"Oh, yes," he answered; "I sleep a good deal. Only it is so hot and close down below, I prefer to be on deck. In fact, I often bring a blanket up and sleep on deck all night. You are fortunate in having a deck stateroom."

He did not tell her that it was solely to guard that deck stateroom that he stood these enforced watches; that, from the moment he knew that she was aboard, he felt the responsibility for the ship's safety as keenly as did the captain himself. Nor did he believe that he was yielding an inch to his love in all this. Had he not left Paris when fate had brought Gertrude there, rather than remain in temptation? And now when fate had played him the same trick and he could not run away, had he not been strong in his own self-restraint? He was watching over her

and caring for her as he had done all his life, that was all. It would be cowardly for him to shirk that duty because of a sensitive regard for his own feelings.

And so the rough weather continued and the daily walks continued, and lengthened, and increased, until the slight, gray figure like a sea bird blown by the wind, was rarely away from the shelter of his pilot coat.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IT was in the morning watch of the last night at sea. The week of gray, windy weather had culminated off the American coast in a combination of fog and rain, varied with squalls, accompanied by heavy seas. The waning moon, like a cloud-beaten wreck foundering in the western horizon, flashed every now and then a pale signal light across the waste of waters. The great steamer rolled in the long black swell, rolled with such deliberation it seemed at times as though its ponderous weight could not recover itself in time for safety. The wind catching the dense volumes of smoke pouring from the funnels sometimes flaunted it in long streamers across the water, sometimes tore it in shreds and whirled the pieces aloft into mimic clouds, and sometimes beat it out into black *crépe*, with which it fantastically veiled the steamer, the ocean and the moon.

Arthur stood leaning against one of the stanchions of the bridge, looking out at the lights and shadows fleeting across the waves. The last night of his self-appointed guardianship of Gertrude had arrived, the last night that he could watch while she slumbered, the last night that he might be near her with the ocean isolating them from the rest of the world. Like a man suddenly awakened from a dream, he was being rudely aroused from the delusion into which his confidence in his own strength of will had lulled him. The sweet love which his heart had been distilling in the last few days, was now turned to bitterness by the contemplation of the morrow. As he thought of Yates meeting Gertrude on the wharf in the morning, and claiming her as his future wife, he fairly groaned aloud. Again and again he called himself a fool, a weak, miserable fool. And yet, like the deeper waters which are still even in the mightiest storm that tears the surface of the ocean, lay the quiet satisfaction that in all the violence of his passion during the voyage he had never whispered one word of his love in Gertrude's ears. In this he found his only comfort, the comfort of a temptation resisted, of a duty done.

In his dejection he found a companionship in the wild night, with its flying clouds and broken waters, and two o'clock was sounded on the ship's bell before he turned to go below to his berth. Casting a lingering look upon the stateroom wherein the woman that he loved so well was lying asleep, what was his surprise to see the door suddenly open and Gertrude herself, wrapped in a water-proof, step out upon the sloping deck. For a moment Arthur thought that his fancy, occupied as it had been with her image, was deceiving him. Then, as he watched the slender figure in the fitful moonlight steadying itself against the frame of the door and staring around at the ship and the sea, he saw that it was Gertrude, and that she was in trouble. Instantly he was by her side.

"What is it, Gertrude?" he said.

"Arthur, is that you?" she cried. "Oh, Arthur," she continued in a trembling tone, clinging to his arm with both hands, "what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Why, nothing, little girl," he replied, soothingly. "What has frightened you?"

"I don't know," she said, beginning to cry, in a subdued way. "I thought I heard the bell ring and the engine stop, and that you called to me that the ship was sinking! Are you sure nothing is the matter? What makes it roll so?"

"That is the land swell," said Arthur; "it is always so, near the coast. The engines have slowed down, but it is only because there are so many small craft near the land, and the night is not very clear. The bell has just struck the hour; perhaps that was what startled you out of your sleep. There! there! don't cry. We shall sight Sandy Hook light before long. You ought not to get nervous now when you are so near home."

But his words seemed unheeded as she still clung to his arm and gazed fearfully around. Then she said, drawing a long breath, "Are you sure there is no danger? Oh, I have had such a dreadful dream! I dreamed that I was with my poor, dear mother and father, once more, on board that awful ship and I thought that we were sinking, that we were drowning. And oh, the water was so black and cold! May I stay out here just for a moment?"

"Why, of course," he answered, while his heart began to beat quickly. "Come over here where you will be more comfortable," he added, leading her to a signal chest near the mainmast.

She would not sit down, however, but stood leaning against the mast, holding on to the ropes, looking out over the water.

"Sit down, Gertrude, please," said Arthur, with infinite tenderness in his tone, "you are trembling so. Dear child, don't be frightened, because I assure you there is no more danger than if you were ashore. Just think," he added, with a confused idea of distracting her thoughts from their terror, "you will be ashore to-morrow." Then as all that that announcement meant for him came back to his mind, he added with an irresistible impulse, yet with a feeling of guilt as he yielded to it, "Will you be glad?"

"Glad?" she replied, looking up at him in a confused way. Then as her gaze wandered off to the water he saw that the wildness of the night had not reassured her. She was still frightened, and her thoughts were not with him. Much less did she realize what was passing in his mind, that brooding of his love for her during all these hours her coming was but an embodiment of his thoughts, that her coming had found his love unguarded, and now that love would not be denied. And so with passionate insistence he repeated, "Listen to me, Gertrude. You will be ashore to-morrow. Will you be glad?"

Something, perhaps the pressure of his hand upon her arm as he steadied her against the rolling of the ship, perhaps a tremble in his voice, revealed to her his thoughts. She turned and looked at him, and said nervously, in a troubled tone, "I don't know, I—" Then with a quick recovery of her self-possession, she forced a laugh and added, hurriedly, "How silly I am! I am sure I don't know what has made me so nervous to-night. I don't know when I have been so terribly frightened. What did you ask me? If I would be glad to get home? Of course I shall. It has been a pleasant voyage, but I think we shall all be glad when it is over. And now if you will give me your arm as far as my stateroom I will say good night. I don't think I shall be so foolish again."

"You will be glad, of course," said Arthur, moodily, ignoring her last remark, "but as for me, I should be just as well pleased if the ship turned around here and went back to Europe, or to Jericho, or to the bottom, for that matter!"

"Why do you talk like that?" she said.

"If you want to know," he answered, hotly, "I will tell you."

He felt that all the barriers that he had erected against himself

were at this last moment being swept away, but he did not care. His love was dispelling his resolution as the wind did the smoke, but he heeded it as little. It was all so unreal, the hour, the surroundings, the nature of the meeting, it was like a dream, with the irresponsibility which characterizes one's actions in a dream.

"After all," he continued, "I don't know why I should not tell you. It is because I love you."

Gertrude made no reply at first, but, as the moon cast a parting gleam across the ship, she slowly turned toward him and looked into his face. After a moment's scrutiny she said in a tone which to his surprise, was apparently devoid of emotion, "Do you love me, Arthur? Since when? Since I have been engaged to some one else?"

Then Arthur's surprise gave place to angry indignation at the injustice, as he chose to consider it, of this sarcastic answer.

"Is that fair?" he cried.

"Or, perhaps," continued Gertrude, "it is only since the idle days of a sea voyage had to be filled in." Then as Arthur made no reply to this, after waiting a moment Gertrude went on, "But I forgot, you asked me if what I said was fair. Yes, quite as fair as, considering the circumstances, it was for you to say what you did, to take advantage of my being here to say what, under any circumstances, you had no right to say!"

"That is true; it was very wrong of me," said Arthur humbly. "I am sorry, and I beg your pardon."

Then Gertrude laid her hand upon his arm and said very gently, "I will forgive you," adding in a lighter tone, "the more readily because I don't believe you quite understood or meant what you said."

Quickly taking the hand that rested on his arm, Arthur exclaimed hurriedly and with considerable emotion, "Gertrude, do more for me! It is probably the last time I shall ever ask a kindness from you. All that I want is for you to listen to me a moment. I shall not offend you." Then without waiting for a reply he hurried on, "I did not intend ever to say what I did to-night; your coming surprised it from me. But, as it is, I cannot bear to have you misunderstand me; although I don't see how I can make you understand, how I can explain the feelings I have had for you all my life. As a boy I loved you. You know that, yet you don't know what that love was like. I worshipped you,

Gertrude, that is the only word that expresses it. You cannot have forgotten the power you had over me, the power that nobody else possessed. Why? Because I loved you so. You were my religion, my conscience, my guardian angel. I looked upon you with a strange reverence, as men do upon heaven. I don't think you ever understood all this. How should you? I did not myself. When after our separation you came to Carleton, all this grew upon me. You were so lovely and so pure, while I—I felt myself unworthy, almost, to touch your hand. God knows I loved you more than ever then, but the more I loved you, the higher you seemed above me. You were not like other women to me. It made me angry to see men who I knew were no better than myself, presuming to take your hand, or whisper compliments; it seemed like sacrilege. That night at Newport, when I heard for the first time rumors that you were engaged, and to that—that man, and I afterward saw him constantly by your side, I could not understand it. I could have killed him for his insolence! Imagine, then, if you can, what I felt when I heard that you had given yourself to him, that you were going to be his *wife*. It was horrible! I was furious with him, with you, with every one! I believed that he had entrapped you, had taken advantage of your goodness, your innocence, to inveigle you into a scheme of which you did not understand the meaning. I told you then, in my letter, that I had lost my religion a second time and that it was a worse loss than the other, but you did not understand, you thought me extravagant. I am not surprised. It was our meeting in Paris, almost as strangers, that suddenly awakened me. I saw you there for the first time in my life as a woman whom a man might win. The thought almost blinded me. Fool that I had been! I hated myself and my past. At that moment I would have given all that I hold best in the world, life itself, for one word of love from you, of the love that I was feeling."

With heaving chest and broken voice he stopped, and the throbbing of the engines, the creaking of the blocks and the noises of the water sounded in the silence. Gertrude had made no movement since Arthur had begun to speak. She stood turned away from him slightly, with her forehead resting on the arm which raised above her head, held to the ropes around the mast. When, as he paused, she made no answer, he exclaimed, hopelessly: "Pshaw! What is the use of saying all this! All the talking in the world don't make you understand. Only you may imagine

that when such a love as mine grows up with a man from his earliest childhood, the rooting it up is not an easy matter; and so there was nothing left for me to do but keep out of your way. How well I have succeeded," he added, with a short laugh, "you can judge for yourself.

As Gertrude continued to remain in her former attitude without making a sign, he said, after a moment's silence, "Are you still angry with me?"

Then she raised her head, but without looking at him, and answered, "No, no, I believe all that you have told me. Only don't say any more just now." And he felt that she was crying.

"You are sorry for me," he said sadly; "I might have known you would be."

Yes, she was sorry, sorry for him and for herself, and angry and bitter as well.

"But," he continued, "I only want you to try and understand all this. I don't want it to make you unhappy; my life is not worth that. If only you will be happy that will comfort me more than anything else. And this man that you are going to marry, are you sure that he will make you happy? You will not be offended if I say that, knowing you as well as I do, I cannot understand your engagement to him. Sometimes I tell myself that it must be because I do not know him; that he has qualities which I do not understand, do not appreciate; that your love discovered traits in him which are in some way worthy of you, and which as his wife may make you happy. And yet I cannot understand. Won't you tell me, for the sake of the love that I have borne you all my life, tell me what it is that has made you love Mr. Yates?"

She was silent again.

Watching her keenly he continued after a few moments, "Perhaps you *don't* love him!" Then as she still remained silent he broke forth, excitedly, "For God's sake, Gertrude, tell me that you don't love him! It is so; you cannot deny it! Ah, Gertrude, only listen to me, you have been trapped into this engagement, you shall—"

"Stop!" exclaimed Gertrude, suddenly raising herself erect. "You have gone too far. I can listen to no more. As for my being trapped, as you call it, understand once and for all that no one has had anything to do with this but myself."

"Then why have you done it?" he demanded.

"Because," she exclaimed passionately, "I—I—" and then checking herself she added, "It is not a matter that I can explain to you. You have no right to ask it, you have no right to question me."

"I have a right," he answered, quickly, "our past life and former friendship, if nothing else, give me the right to guard you against a false step that may ruin your life as far as happiness is concerned. I have a right to question you, and if you don't love this man I insist upon your telling me why you are going to marry him." And as she made no answer, he continued, "Do you hear?"

Then, suddenly she turned and confronted him. "Arthur," she said, "were you in love with Mrs. Merrin?"

"Mrs. Merrin!" he exclaimed, astounded.

"Yes," she replied, "Mrs. Merrin."

"What do you mean?" he said, while his heart sank within him. Was this guilty ghost never to be laid? "That is not a question you should ask."

"Oh, is that not like a man," exclaimed Gertrude, "to take refuge behind propriety? However, if you cannot answer me, it is of no consequence."

"But I can answer you," he replied, calmly. "Mrs. Merrin is nothing to me."

"You loved her!"

"I did not!"

"You did not?"

"No. When I was little more than a boy, at college, she made me think perhaps I did."

"And afterward did she keep on making you *think* perhaps that you did? Or did she *convince* you of it?"

"I tell you, Gertrude, I never loved her! What do you mean by bringing up her name?"

"Never mind," replied Gertrude, "but answer my question. If you did not love her, why did you obey her, devote yourself to her and parade your attentions before the whole world?"

"Gertrude, she is not a person for you to talk of," persisted Arthur. "You have no right to mention her name."

"I have a right," she answered, mocking him. "Our former friendship gives me that right."

"Oh, very well, then," he replied, quietly. "As I have already told you, Mrs. Merrin made me believe while I was at college,

that I loved her. We were together a great deal and people talked of it. One night we were out sailing together and did not get home till very late. It was discovered. There was a row and—and, all that sort of thing. Her husband came down to Carlton and took her home. Well, I believed that it was all my fault that she had been compromised, and so I put myself entirely at her disposal then or thereafter, at any time that she might demand my services. It was quixotic; it was idiotic! On my honor as a gentleman, there was no more need for it all than there was for my going out and drowning myself. But she chose to make a great deal of it, and afterwards held me to my promise. You had gone out of my life then, and I did not care much what became of me."

Gertrude was silent for a few moments, and then said, "Did you ever talk of me to Mrs. Merrin?"

"Did I ever talk of you? To her!" exclaimed Arthur. "After what I have told you, can you ask me such a question? Can you not understand that your name was sacred to me; that I never uttered it aloud to a living soul?"

"On your word of honor?"

"On my word of honor!"

Again she was silent.

"Gertrude," said Arthur, quietly, "won't you tell me what all this means?"

"Yes," she answered, in a low voice, "I will try. I think perhaps I owe you that much." Then, after another pause, she continued, "About six months ago, I received an anonymous letter—and since then I have had reasons to think that it came from Mrs. Merrin. In it she said that—that you had said that—oh, Arthur, I cannot tell you! Can you not understand?" she cried, in despair.

"No," said Arthur, "I can't understand. Tell me what she said. Perhaps I can relieve your mind on that point, at least."

"She said that you boasted before a roomful of people that," and here her voice sank, "that I was hopelessly in love with you."

"What!" cried Arthur. But almost instantly, to her astonishment, he laughed. "How utterly absurd!" he said, "Why, it is simply preposterous!"

Then, as she made no response, he looked at her with some bewilderment, as she stood leaning against the mast, dimly outlined in the faint light. Until at last, he burst out with, "But—but—you did not think anything of it?" in a half incredulous, half

doubtful tone. "You did not let such an impossible lie as that worry you?"

"Yes, I did," she answered, and her voice was choked with tears, and she twined her fingers together with nervous strength.

"My God, Gertrude!" exclaimed Arthur. "Think a moment! You did not believe that I ever said such a thing." Still she was silent. "Oh!" he cried, with a long drawn breath. "How could you? It was shameful! You knew me better than that. How dared you think such a thing of me? Whatever else you may have thought of me, you knew at least that I was a gentleman."

"I believed it because it was true," she murmured.

"But I tell you—" he said, indignantly, and then checking himself, he added, coldly, "Under the circumstances, all that I can say is that you have been deceived. It is not true."

"I don't mean that you said it," she answered, in great distress, struggling to repress her tears; "but that it was true—I don't mind telling you now that it is all past—it was true that I did love you. No, no!" she exclaimed, placing her hand upon his breast and checking him, as he bent over her with a cry. "You must not. Remember that all this is passed. I have listened to what you told me, and I believe it all. I am even glad that you told me, because it has explained much that I have misunderstood, and that has pained me. For the same reason I am not ashamed to say what I have said; our past life seems to make it sacred. But all this must be like the love we have for those who are dead—a memory, and no more. No matter how it all came about; if I have made mistakes, that is no reason that I should not do right. I am in honor bound to Mr. Yates, and hereafter my thoughts must be for him alone."

Then Arthur let fall his hands, and raising his head, said, "Now, listen to me. Some one has been playing upon your sensitive nature to mislead you into this engagement. If you marry this man, it will be a crime, a sacrilegious crime. You shall not do it. You may not marry me—but you shall never marry him. Do you hear me? As there is a God in heaven, that man shall never call you his wife!"

CHAPTER XL.

SAD indeed must be the heart that after long absence sees again its native land, without being gladdened, especially when that land appears as it appeared to the voyagers on the "City of Bordeaux," in the bright, fresh, early morning, the low-lying, sandy shores a pale gold in the sunlight, the merry, blue-eyed waves dancing and running with rippling laughter, as they raced with the white-sailed coasting craft, and over all an ultramarine sky, itself a sea laden with dreams of ships sailing on noiseless missions. As the steamer majestically forced its way through the water toward the entrance of New York harbor, expressions of delight, of recognition, of enthusiastic admiration, burst from all parts of the crowded deck, while nearly every eye beamed with happiness and hope.

Of our little party, however, Mrs. Dudley alone joined in these outward demonstrations of pleasure. Gertrude looking pale and distraught, with dark lines under her downcast eyes, was silent, while her aunt, who stood by her, making every now and then a poor pretence of sharing Mrs. Dudley's outspoken satisfaction, eyed her niece askance, noting the change which the night had made and in ignorance of its immediate cause, attributing it with miserable anxiety to the coming meeting with Mr. Yates. Arthur, standing a little apart, was silent, too, but with nothing of dejection in his mien. On the contrary, though he was grave and thoughtful, a high resolve was written in his bearing. His eyes had an expression which might have lit up the gaze of Galahad when, girdled with the belt of the saintly maiden's hair, he swore his vow to win the Holy Grail.

At last the steamer arrived at its anchorage, and the official formalities having been disposed of, the landing of the passengers began. Would Mr. Yates be at the dock to meet them? This was the first thought that arose in Gertrude's mind. She had written to him before their departure, telling him of it, but she was not sure that he would receive the letter before their arrival.

But then again, he would undoubtedly see her name in the telegraphed list of passengers—hers and Arthur's. As this juxtaposition occurred to her, the first sense of guilt attaching to the occurrence of the previous night, flushed her face. She shrank from the meeting with Mr. Yates and hurriedly sought in her mind for some pretext whereby she might avoid him. As she instinctively looked around in this mental search, her eyes encountered Arthur standing near, then instantly they dropped and a great joy sprang up in her heart and vanquished fear, guilt, and all other emotions by its might.

Her apprehensions were without foundation, however, for when they landed Major Arlingford was the only one to greet them. Mr. Yates did not make his appearance. Relieved and gladdened by his absence, Gertrude welcomed the respite and bestowed little thought upon the possible significance of this dereliction on the part of her betrothed. She watched with eager interest the meeting between Arthur and his father, and while she wondered at the simple grasp of the hand and still simpler greeting, she felt the depth of love—even tenderness—that was concealed beneath the undemonstrative exteriors of these two, tall, strong men.

It was a relief to her to give scope to her own feelings. She had always been very fond of her uncle, and now that fondness was strengthened by a new attraction.

After arriving at the hotel where Major Arlingford had secured rooms for the party, Mrs. Arlingford expressed a desire to proceed to Washington without delay. Now that the excitement of travel was subsiding, and she had nothing to look forward to, the failure of her search for health began to have its depressing effect. Dispirited and nervous, Mr. Yates' neglect to meet them also helped to fill her with forebodings and added to her dejection. She was in constant dread lest he should intrude upon them at any moment in some tragic manner, announcing to the world her husband's dishonor, their own miserable contract, and her lack of good faith even in this. She urged the major to procure tickets for the next train to Washington, declaring in answer to his protest, that she needed rest and that she could rest only at home. Mrs. Dudley was equally anxious to reach her home, that she might make the necessary preparations for proceeding to Southern California, where she intended to spend the winter with her son, in the hope that the climate would benefit his health. And so, with good wishes and plans for a future meeting, the two parties

separated, the Dudleys going to Boston, while Gertrude and her aunt, escorted by Arthur and his father, took the night train for Washington.

Throughout the day, Gertrude had been silent and abstracted. The absence of Mr. Yates caused her no uneasiness, but rather afforded relief in that it permitted her to commune with her thoughts unmolested. All day long, she had been going over and over the words that Arthur had uttered the night before. The self-abasement and humility of the devotion which he had unfolded to her touched her soul, and while she longed to dethrone herself in his imagination that there might be, even in fancy, no separation from him, she recognized the fact that no less a love, no less a devotion than this would have satisfied her. She understood it all now and gloried in it. A sense of satisfaction, even, pervaded her heart at the thought that Arthur knew she loved him, knew it from her own lips. And yet all through this period of ecstasy, no thought of the possibility of this revelation altering her relations with Mr. Yates in any way, had entered her mind. Arthur's love was something apart from, something above and beyond any other event in her life, an essence too rare to be taken up immediately and assimilated with her daily existence, and, therefore, as yet, powerless to alter its material concerns.

So this day passed, and the night came, during which they journeyed to Washington, and with the night, tender dreams, from which each awakening was a grief.

As the day dawned on her fitful slumber, it found her with open eyes watching the masses of shapeless shadows flitting by to the refrain of the humming wheels, until houses and barns, bushes and trees, took shape in the gray light, and finally the beautiful dome of the Capitol hung like a white cloud above the foliage of the surrounding country, the arch of lights where the Long Bridge spanned the Potomac, twinkled palely into view, the state buildings loomed into prominence above the still sleeping city, and the train swept into the depot at Washington. A bustle of preparation followed, their carriage rattled through the empty streets and once more she was at home.

As Gertrude entered her own rooms, she seemed to have lost her place among the contents, so identified were they with her past life, so alien to her present emotions. With the feeling of being but a temporary occupant, she sat down by the open window and watched the sunrise—that phenomenon of nature which

holds so much that is fascinating and full of promise for youth. The entrance of a servant with her breakfast, disturbed her reverie. This prosaic interruption jarred upon her. It was a summons to resume the commonplace routine of daily life, to take up the burden of daily habits. She felt depressed by it, unreasonably so, she thought, until it suddenly occurred to her that there was no place for Arthur in the coming succession of hours. As the morning wore away, this feeling grew upon her; she became restless and unable to fix her attention upon any of her ordinary pursuits. Once she arose with the intention of going out for a walk, but the thought that Arthur might come while she was gone caused her to relinquish it. She did not pause to consider the possibility of his coming; it seemed impossible that he should not come. When her trunks arrived from the depot, she bade the maid unpack them, and choosing one of her prettiest Paris morning costumes, she made an elaborate toilet. Then wandering aimlessly from room to room, she waited. At last, a servant sought her out, bearing a salver with a card upon it. Smilingly, the woman said, "A gentleman, Miss, to see you. He is in the parlor."

With a sudden tumult in her heart, Gertrude took the card and read the name.

It was Mr. Paul Yates.

CHAPTER XLI.

MEANTIME, Arthur, proudly escorted by his father, arrived at the old familiar home on Lafayette Street, and early though it was, found some one evidently on watch behind the parlor curtains. For, as the carriage stopped, the house door was thrown open and a pair of arms were around Arthur's neck before he was well inside the hall, and Kate, laughing through her tears, bade him welcome home.

"So you are up, are you, young lady?" said the major. "Well, and where is mamma?"

"She is in there," said Kate, releasing her brother to point to the half-open door of the library. "Go to her, Arthur," she added, giving him a last hug.

And Arthur went in to his mother and presently reappeared with her, his arm around her waist and her tear-stained, smiling face resting on his shoulder. Then there were so many questions to be asked and so many to be answered, and so much to be said, that finally the major had to interfere to enable Arthur to go to his apartment and get rid of the dust of travel. And even then the two women fondly followed to show him the way to his old, well-remembered room, as though that was necessary. After breakfast, the major having business to attend to, left Arthur to his mother and sister. Seated between them, he devoted an hour or two to telling them all that had happened since he had been away and listening in turn to what they had to tell of the changes in their circle of acquaintances. He congratulated Kate on her engagement to Mr. Langdon, of which he had been informed in Paris by that gentleman himself, and teased her with a humorous description of Langdon's rhapsodies when her name was mentioned, his fits of abstraction and other mental disturbances which are popularly believed to characterize the absent lover. And Kate blushed and protested all to no avail until she unwittingly, but very effectually, changed the subject by referring to Gertrude's engagement to Mr. Yates. Although but little was said about it by Kate or her

mother, Arthur was permitted to see that it met with their very decided disapproval. At the same time, they proceeded to question him closely about Gertrude. When did he meet her in Paris? Was he with her a great deal? Did she seem happy? Why did she and Aunt Mary return so soon? And how did he happen to come back on the same steamer with them? Which inquiries Arthur answered briefly and as unconcernedly as he could, at the same time displaying, in spite of himself, the intense feeling which the subject roused in his breast. For, from the moment he had bade Gertrude good-by a few hours before, his thoughts had never ceased to busy themselves with her. Throughout the meeting with his mother and sister, plans and projects concerning Gertrude's future and his own flowed like a resistless undercurrent through his mind. Unable to decide upon anything, his thoughts finally settled down to inventing some plausible excuse for getting away and seeing her once more. The necessity for preserving some sort of appearance of interest and pleasure in this home reunion, grew more and more irksome. Determining to avail himself immediately after luncheon of the excuse of calling upon his aunt to make inquiries regarding her health after the fatigues of the journey, he awaited the midday meal with poorly concealed impatience. Finally the major returned, and with him came the hour of luncheon. When the repast was finished, Arthur announced his intention of going out for a short time. Kate instantly made a plaintive appeal to be permitted to accompany him, and when he evaded her request on the plea that he had business at the Navy Department, she declared that she would go and see Gertrude. This startling announcement rather upset Arthur's plans, until bethinking himself that his sister's toilet would occupy some time, he determined not to let her intention interfere with his own.

Arriving at his aunt's house, inquiry developed the fact that that lady was lying down in her own room. Miss Gertrude, however, was at home and would see him. Whereupon Arthur went into the parlor and waited. Presently a soft rustling of skirts in the hall set his pulses beating, and Gertrude entered the room. He went quickly to her side and took her hand, while a faint color suffused her face and a warm light came to her eyes, making her very lovely to look upon. Then the color faded away, leaving her pale and grave, and Arthur saw that she had been weeping.

"I thought you would come," she said, looking up frankly into his eyes, at the same time withdrawing her hand.

All that he could answer was, "My darling!"

At the words, her eyes fell from his and her lip trembled. She slowly shook her head. Then, looking up again, she said, with gentle gravity, "Arthur, if you expect to see me any more, you must promise not to take advantage of what I said the other night. I am afraid now that I ought not to have let you know that—that I—cared for you in that way. You must forget that it ever happened."

"That is impossible," he answered, quietly.

"You must," she said, "or else never see me again. Perhaps that would be best. I have promised to marry him. I—I did not think, that is, I thought—" Then, with a gesture of desperation, she threw back her head and cried, "Oh, can't you understand? How can I listen to you; how can I look him in the face without shame?"

"Has he been here?" exclaimed Arthur, with sudden suspicion.

"Yes," she replied, while her color slowly deepened and her eyes again sought the floor.

"Here! In Washington, so soon!" said Arthur. "And may I ask where he was when you landed from the steamer? Why he was not there to meet you?"

"He *was* there," she replied. "He saw us land, and—and—"

"And would not show himself because you were with me!" said Arthur, scornfully. "I thought I saw him skulking in the crowd. And so he watched us, and came down on the same train. The fool! The ill-conditioned cur!"

Raising her head, Gertrude stepped quickly in front of him, and resting a hand on either shoulder, she looked him in the face, and said gravely, "Arthur, stop! This will never do. I shall not allow you to speak that way of the man I am going to marry."

"Gertrude," he replied, laying his hands on hers and looking straight into her eyes, "remember what I said. You shall never marry that man! Never!" Then his face darkened with a sinister expression, and he added, "I will kill him first!"

"Oh, hush, hush!" cried Gertrude. "This is wicked. It is not kind of you to add to my unhappiness with such awful thoughts. It is unlike you. It is unmanly. Yes, yes, it is!" she persisted, as he tried to protest. "It is unmanly and unkind!"

"But, Gertrude, my sweetheart," cried Arthur, desperately, trying at the same time to draw her closer.

But she took her hands from his shoulders and drew back quickly with her hands still upraised, and said, "No; you must not touch me. My mind is made up. I shall marry Mr. Yates. I have promised. And there must be no more of this between us."

"Promise!" exclaimed Arthur. "It was no promise. He forced it from you, through a misunderstanding. He did not get it fairly; he took advantage of you!"

"No," said Gertrude, simply. "You are wrong. You do not know all. It was I who took advantage of him. I was deeply wounded, and in my pride I accepted him. I told him that I did not love him, but I gave him my word that I would marry him."

"I tell you, Gertrude," rejoined Arthur, hotly, "no man would bind you to keep your word under such circumstances, and even if he did there is no reason why you should."

"Oh, Arthur, you do not mean that!" she said. "You, who are the soul of honor! What credit would there be in keeping our word only when it pleased us? What would our honor be worth if we followed it only when it was pleasant and easy? You do not mean that, Arthur, because—because— Did not you keep a promise that was less binding than mine? You kept it, and I know from what you have said that you would have kept it even if it had ruined your life."

"*I?* I was a fool! and as for ruining my life, it seems to have ruined it as it is! My God! am I never to have done with that piece of idiocy! Is that woman's scheme to separate us, going to be successful, after all! Don't let her come between us, Gertrude, little girl! She has made enough misery already. And, after all, what have I done, that I should be so punished? If I am to lose you now—now that I know you love me—I would rather her husband had killed me. Yes, rather than that she should come between us now, hating her though I do, I would rather she had succeeded in making me the companion of her miserable life. It would have been less hard to bear."

"Oh, my dear," cried Gertrude, the tears springing to her eyes, "Don't say that! For my sake, if you love me, don't say that!"

"It is because I love you so that I say it," replied Arthur. "I cannot live and lose you! And, as for seeing you the wife of this man—oh, it is monstrous! I could not bear it!"

"Arthur, listen to me," said Gertrude. "Since I have been called upon to decide this matter, I have thought it all out. I have prayed over it. All night long I have struggled to see it as you would have me see it; yes, as I myself would have it, but it is of no use. It is harder for me than it is for you, because you at least will be alone—free—with your own thoughts, and free to find distraction in the society of others—though you will never forget me, will you?—while I, I will have"—her voice faltered and she paused for a moment, and then bravely continued: "Don't make it worse for me than it is, Arthur! You have often told me that you believed me better than other women. I am not. But, at least, I can keep my word. It is of him that I must think. I have permitted him to love me, understanding that I did not love him in return, but with the promise that I would marry him. I cannot in honor retract. Even you would not respect me as much if I broke my word. No, no, I know what you are going to say, but the time would come when you would remember it. And anyway I should always remember it myself, and how could I be to you all that a wife should be to her husband, feeling that I had forfeited the least portion of your respect? It used to trouble me, sometimes, to hear you say how good I was, and knowing my own weakness, I have trembled for fear that some day you would find me wanting. That is the only consolation I have in all this now; I have an opportunity to prove myself not altogether unworthy of what you think me—not altogether unworthy of your love."

"You mean that you will marry this man?" said Arthur.

"I mean that if he holds me to my promise, I will keep it," replied Gertrude.

"But if you tell him the truth and he has a spark of manhood in him, he must release you," said Arthur. "Let me tell him," he added, grimly, "and I am sure he will release you."

"I have already told him," said Gertrude, with lowered gaze.

"When?" said Arthur, eagerly. "This morning?"

She nodded her head.

"And what did he say?"

"That he knew it already."

"What!" exclaimed Arthur. "That you loved me?"

"On, no, no," cried Gertrude, shrinking, "I could not tell him that!"

"But I can," said Arthur, "and I will. And what is more, he shall give you up or I'll know the reason why!"

"You must not!" exclaimed Gertrude, quickly.

"But I will!" he said.

"I forbid you to," she replied, resolutely. "I forbid you to see him; to speak to him!"

Arthur was silent for a moment, and then looking at her curiously, he said, "Are you not just a little in love with Mr. Yates, after all? Because if you are, of course, I have nothing more to say."

She did not answer him immediately. Then turning she looked him straight in the face while the tears slowly blinded her eyes.

"I do not think," she said, at last, very quietly, "that you understand exactly what you are saying."

In an instant he was kneeling at her feet. "My darling!" he cried, "I did not mean it! I would not hurt you for all the world! Forgive me, please, forgive me! My love for you drives me mad, so that I don't know what I say. Oh, Gertrude, I will do anything that you want, I will be guided by you as I have been all my life, if you will only love me! If you will only love me, I will do anything in the wide world for your dear sake!"

"Will you?" she said, relenting instantly and fondly brushing the hair away from his upturned forehead with a caressing touch. "Will you be my own dear boy once more, and—and—leave me?"

Then as he started and was about to arise, she detained him by a slight pressure of her hand and added, "For my sake! Will you leave me, for my sake? For both of our sakes; for the sake of our honor?"

He was quite still for a few moments, with his head bowed under her hand. Then looking up, he saw how pale she was, how her eyes were brimming with tears and her teeth were sunk in her trembling lip, and a faint conception of what she was suffering for the sake of what she believed to be right, filled him with exalted adoration for her, and subdued him to her will. With a long drawn breath, he answered, "If that is what you want me to do, for you sake, I will try my best. But—I had rather die!"

Bending forward, she pressed a kiss upon his forehead, and

sighed almost inaudibly, "Ah, so would I!" Then arising hurriedly, she whispered, "Go now, go!" And as he still hesitated, she drew herself up, with quivering chin and the tears rolling down her cheeks, and pointing to the door, said, with trembling voice, "Will you not do as I ask you?"

There was no recourse for him but to obey,

CHAPTER XLII.

THAT afternoon when Kate returned home from her visit to Gertrude, she sought her mother's room and sitting down without removing her bonnet, gazed out of the window.

"Did you see Gertrude?" said Catherine, looking up from her knitting, as Kate showed no intention of speaking.

Kate slowly nodded her head.

"How does she look?" said Catherine.

"About the same," said Kate, without taking her eyes from the street.

"Well, but tell me about her," said Catherine, remonstratively. "Is she glad to get home?"

"I don't know," said Kate. Then, arousing herself, she turned and looking in her mother's face, said: "Mamma, when I went to see Gertrude I found Arthur just coming away."

"Yes?" said her mother, not much impressed by the fact.

"You know he said he was going to the Navy Department," continued Kate, "and when I told him I was going to see Gertrude, he did not say anything about going there himself."

"Oh, well, Kate," said Catherine, apologetically, "he probably thought of something he wanted to tell your Aunt Mary."

"No," said Kate, "he only saw Gertrude, and when I met him coming away he looked so strange and scarcely spoke to me. And when I went up to Gertrude's room I found her crying as though her heart would break."

Then Catherine's hands slowly sank into her lap and she looked at Kate. For fully a minute neither of them spoke. Finally, with a sort of despairing emphasis, Kate said, "Do you know, mamma, I have thought all along that Arthur was in love with Gertrude, and, from what I saw to-day, I believe that Gertrude is in love with him!"

"Then why has she engaged herself to that man?" demanded Arthur's mother, indignantly.

"I don't know," said Kate thoughtfully, shaking her head.

"Unless," she added, after a pause, "unless it is that she and Arthur had had some trouble and she engaged herself to Mr. Yates while she was angry. The more I think of it," Kate continued, with an air of conviction, "the more I am inclined to believe that that is the secret of it all."

"That is not like Gertrude," said Catherine, decidedly, "I don't believe that she would do anything so silly or—or so wicked," she added.

"Well, I don't know then," said Kate, "I don't know what else to think of it."

Then followed another silence during which the thoughts of both were busy with the past, in the light of Kate's discovery. At last Catherine with a poor pretence of conviction said, "If it should be true and Gertrude knows that Arthur loves her and she cares anything for him, of course she won't marry Mr. Yates."

"You can't tell," said Kate, "she might think it was her duty."

"Her duty, Katie!" cried Catherine, with great warmth. "She surely cannot think it her duty to marry a man she does not love! To my mind, that would be a sin!"

"Gertrude may not look at it in that way," said Kate, "and whatever she believes is right, she will do, and all the talking in the world won't alter it."

Then came another long silence, at the end of which Kate arose with a sigh. "If it had only happened a year ago I should have been so glad. But now—poor Arthur, I never saw him look so unhappy before."

Catherine said nothing, but in her heart all the forces of a mother's love were gathered to do battle for her first born's sake. She determined that he should not be made unhappy, he should not be made to suffer, not if she could prevent it, and she could and would prevent it. Anxiously she waited Arthur's return, that she might judge for herself, and, as the afternoon passed away and he did not come, her fears began to be realized. It was not until the hour for dinner had arrived that he made his appearance, and then it required but a glance of his mother's eye to confirm her suspicions.

There was no doubt but that he was in trouble, not that he betrayed himself by any unusual exhibition of emotion—on the contrary, feeling that these women were watching him, he was on his guard, and acted a careless, light-hearted part to the best of his ability; but the events of the afternoon had left their mark.

Unable to confine this momentous discovery to her own breast, Catherine, not without some misgivings, resolved to confide the secret to the person to whom sooner or later she confided every thought. Not without some misgiving, for the reason that she feared her husband would not take the same view of the matter, as she insisted on taking. With Machiavellian subtlety, therefore, she determined to sound the major before telling him the whole truth. Accordingly, when they had retired to the privacy of their own apartment, that night, and the subject of conversation naturally turned to Arthur's arrival and appearance, Catherine remarked, "I think he is so changed, Tom."

"Why, now, do you, my dear?" said the major, in a surprised tone. "For my part I don't see that he has changed at all, he looks exactly the same as when he left."

"I don't mean his face," said Catherine, "but his ways and manner."

"Oh, he isn't changed a particle," said the major, "not a particle. A little more subdued, perhaps, a little more thoughtful, but that is natural, he is older and has been rubbing against the world."

"He seems to me," said Catherine, "as though he had something on his mind."

"Oh, nonsense, my dear!" said the major, "that is all fancy. What should he have on his mind? Except, perhaps, his examination for promotion, and from what I have heard his superior officers say, he has no reason to fear that."

"He may be in love with some one," ventured Catherine timidly.

Whereat the major laughed. "Of course he is," he replied. "Every midshipman is in love with somebody, half a dozen somebodies."

"I don't think it is a subject to make a jest of, Tom," said Catherine, severely.

"Well, my dear," said the major, remonstratively, "then don't have such silly, romantic notions about the boy."

A pause followed this little passage, broken by Catherine saying: "Do you think Gertrude is any better for the trip?"

"Well," replied the major, ignoring the significant sequence, "I saw so little of her I could not judge, especially as she was tired with travelling. Her eyes seem brighter and she has more color than when she left."

"Have you heard when she is to be married?" continued Catherine.

"No," said the major, with little show of interest.

"Tom," said Catherine, as though the idea then and there occurred to her, for the first time, "Tom, I am quite sure that Gertrude does not care anything for Mr. Yates. It is a wonder to me how she ever became engaged to him. I don't believe she knows her own mind."

"Quite possibly, my dear; women seldom do," replied her husband, dryly.

"It would be very unfortunate if she or Arthur cared anything for each other, now," said Catherine, reflectively.

"How that idea runs in your head, Catherine," said the major, impatiently. "Why should they suddenly fall in love with each other now, any more than they did before Gertrude became engaged?"

His wife made no reply and after a few moments' silence, as she herself in fact expected, the major was provoked into inquiring, "Why do you suggest such a thing?"

This was what Catherine was waiting for, and so, proceeding with her story, she told her husband what Kate had seen and how her own observation had confirmed Kate's conjectures. But although she involuntarily colored the incidents to suit her interpretation, the effect created on the major was disappointing. In fact he pooh-poohed the whole idea as a pet theory of Catherine's, reawakened by a fancy of Miss Kate's, whose thoughts, he said, were naturally running in a sentimental channel just now.

Catherine rather resented this summary disposition of the matter, and gave vent to a sigh which said as plainly as possible, "It is no use trying to convince you, my dear, but one of these days you will give me credit for having some little perception." Of which protest, however, the major took no notice, his thoughts having travelled off until arriving at a sudden suspicion, he said, "At any rate, even if there is any reason to suppose that Arthur cares for Gertrude, it will do no good now to talk of it. It would be unwise in the extreme for him to cherish any such feeling, and I sincerely hope that you and Kate will be very cautious not to encourage anything of the sort." And he looked at his wife for assent.

"But," she replied, "I don't see why, Tom."

"Why!" said the major, with surprised emphasis, "simply because Gertrude is engaged to marry Mr. Yates."

"But if she loves Arthur and Arthur loves her?" ventured Catherine.

"That does not alter the case," said the major firmly, "they should have discovered that before. What would you think of her if she was engaged to Arthur and broke her engagement to marry Mr. Yates?"

"But, Tom," urged Catherine, "it is a very different matter. If she does not love Mr. Yates it would be doing him a great wrong for her to marry him. Supposing she had made a mistake why should she not rectify it before it is too late? Why should she and Arthur be made miserable on that account? If I could only talk to her, Tom," continued Catherine earnestly, "I know I could help matters very much."

"Once more, my dear," said her husband very decidedly, "I must beg of you not to interfere in any way, shape or form. In the first place your idea is chimerical in the extreme, and even if it were not, you will only make mischief by meddling in the affair. Really, I must insist upon your having nothing to do with it, whatever. Do you understand?"

Yes, Catherine understood, and she knew her husband well enough to understand that this was final. So she said no more. At the same time her intention to take some action in the case, for Arthur's sake, was not in the least altered. She had the greatest respect and admiration for her husband's judgment, and in nearly all the affairs of life she allowed herself to be governed by it, implicitly. But there were occasions, especially in matters of this nature, when she believed that her own judgment was quite as good, nay, even superior to that of Major Arlingford. Her heart misgave her at the thought of disobeying him outright, and in any other cause she would have repelled the temptation, but for Arthur's sake she was content to suffer the pangs of conscience. She relieved her mind somewhat by detailing the conversation to Kate, and at the same time vindicating her proposed course to herself.

"Papa is so odd about some things," she said, "I can't understand him. The idea of supposing that Gertrude is bound to marry Mr. Yates when she does not love him and does love somebody else, just because he has worried and tormented her into saying 'yes!' And then papa said that if she was engaged to Arthur and broke the engagement to marry Mr. Yates I would not feel as I do. That is just like a man! As though there was not all the difference in

the world. And as for making mischief by meddling," continued Catherine, with dignity, "I am not going to 'meddle'; I shall see Gertrude and find out for myself whether she and Arthur care anything for each other, because of course we may be mistaken."

"But how will you find out?" said Kate.

"Oh, I can manage that very easily," replied her mother. "Of course I don't intend to let her know, but there are plenty of ways of finding it out. And then if it is so, I shall talk to her plainly and tell her what I think, just as if she was my own daughter."

"Oh, mamma," said Kate, deprecatingly, "I don't think I would, if I were you."

"And why not, my dear," said her mother, with an assumption of surprise. "Gertrude has always been like a daughter to me, and I have no more hesitation in talking to her than I would have in talking to you."

"Yes, but it is different," said Kate. "It might do more harm than good."

"That is for me to judge, Katie," said her mother.

"But you know, papa said that you had better not interfere," persisted Kate, who secretly had great awe of her father's decisions and fear of the consequences of disobeying them.

But her mother replied with dignity, "That will do, my dear. I am responsible for my actions, not you." Which ended the discussion, as far as Kate was concerned.

On the evening of the day following Catherine's disclosure to her husband, that gentleman announced to his wife that Arthur had determined to spend the ensuing week at Carleton, preparing for his examination. "Of course," said the major, closing the book he was reading, and removing his eye-glasses, "of course he is well enough up in the practical details of his profession, but there is always a mass of theoretical knowledge on which anyone gets rusty, and which needs reading up; and Arthur thinks, very wisely, that he can do much better work by getting off alone in that quiet old place, and making a business of it. There is so much going on here in the way of pleasure, and he is liable to so many interruptions, that I strongly advised him to follow out that idea. To be sure," he continued, toying with his eye-glasses and regarding his wife who sat on the other side of the library table, engaged in some fancy work, "to be sure it is rather a deprivation to us, especially as he has only just returned, but his examination will be over in ten days and then we can have him

entirely to ourselves, with no feeling that he is neglecting his duty to interfere with our enjoyment."

Not a word was said of Gertrude, and yet Catherine felt that this project was because of her, and that the major now secretly believed that she, Catherine, was right in her conjectures. This vindication of her penetration, however, brought her no satisfaction. Her boy, who had only just been returned to her, was going away wounded, going away alone to struggle with his unhappiness, and her mother's heart was full of bitterness. She kept her head bent over her work while her husband spoke, and when he had finished, a tear dropped upon her worsteds. The major could not see her face but he knew very well that that tear had fallen. And he also knew that in the morning Catherine would talk with Gertrude on this very forbidden subject, if, in fact, she had not already done so. But he said nothing.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HUXLEY has compared life to a game of chess, which we are each and all of us called upon to play; the board being the world, the pieces the phenomena of the universe, while the rules of the game are what are termed the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient, but we also know to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To him who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, but he who plays ill is checkmated without haste, but without remorse. Now the records of the game show that unskilled youth, with its charming confidence, almost invariably makes the fatal mistake of advancing its future in pawn for a present advantage. That period seems so far away, its resources so exhaustless, that despite the teaching of the books and the advice of old players, youth cannot resist this apparently simple solution of its early problems.

And so it was that when Gertrude had found herself environed and harassed by the events of the last year, she had put her future in pawn. Ignorant of the value of her pieces, she was now discovering to her cost that she had thrown away those most valued in the game. She had learned, alas! what love meant, just as her knight was being swept from the board, and the game seemed to her no longer worth the playing. She was now beginning to understand the nature of Mr. Yates' passion; what it meant to be engaged; what marriage signified; and her soul sickened with sudden dread and repulsion.

It was at this moment when expecting Arthur, that Mr. Yates' card had been brought to her. Now if that gentleman had taken any decided course in this interview, if he had shown himself glad or sorry, pleased or aggrieved, if he had upbraided her or tried to conciliate her, he would in all probability have done or said the wrong thing, and had all Gertrude's gusty passions concentrated on him with perhaps the result of parting the tie that joined them

together. For once, however, his humble immobility and stolid persistency stood him in good stead. He was simply passive. Pale and hungry-eyed he waited with humility for her to declare herself. He agreed to all that she said, with a little nervous laugh that kept any serious phase of their meeting in the background. All this was exasperating enough, but it gave the pale-faced, brilliant-eyed girl in front of him no just pretext for venting her emotions, and Yates finally went away with their relations unaltered. Only once had he been in great danger, and that was when Gertrude demanded of him his reasons for not meeting her on her arrival in New York. Then he confessed that he had been at the dock when the steamer came in, but seeing her with her friends had thought perhaps that she would not like to have him intrude upon her just then. This, with a conciliatory little laugh that fain would make light of the matter. She knew that he was not telling the truth, and a sudden repugnance for the physical man as he stood there, furtively watching her, made her turn upon him and desperately attempt to reopen their last quarrel.

"You were jealous of my cousin Arthur!" she declared, with bitter scorn. "Why don't you say it like a man?"

Then Mr. Yates, moved by a dull instinct to ignore anything like an acknowledgment that he considered his position insecure, replied eagerly, with an anxious expression that belied his words, "No, oh, no! You told me before you went away that I had no reason to be jealous of Arthur, and of course I believed you. Besides you have promised to marry me; why should I think you care for him?"

At these words, Gertrude's head drooped. Had it been any other man she could have humbled herself before him, confessed all, and besought him to release her from her promise. But her pride revolted from degrading herself before Mr. Yates. She began to realize, with a sickening despair, that she was his prisoner, that his lower order of being had caged her finer organization, and that unless she descended beneath his level she could not escape.

After Yates' departure, Gertrude sought refuge in the sanctuary of her bedchamber. The eager craving for Arthur's presence had now disappeared, and in its place was a dread of his coming. She could not meet him in her present state. She felt herself unfit to enter again the pure temple of their love in which she had innocently dwelt for a few hours. Not that Mr. Yates had even

so much as taken her hand, for from the day when she had tried to scour away the stain left by his first and last kiss, she had invariably confined his attentions to distant courtesies, but she nevertheless felt defiled by her association with him this particular morning. To have talked or thought of love with Arthur, now, would have made her seem a guilty thing.

When Arthur came that afternoon, Gertrude went to meet him with that feeling of exaltation with which martyrs have gone to the stake to uphold their creeds, firm in her intention to say farewell to him, and to be as pure and good as he believed her. For his sake, for the sake of their love, she would be true to her plighted word. But when she had played her part, had closed the door upon that love and bade Arthur good-by forever, the most trying part of her undertaking began. The excitement, the exaltation of her renunciation subsided and left her stranded on the dull, commonplace reality. It was hard to act, but it was harder to endure.

The next morning she was awakened before dawn by the load of unhappiness on her heart, and though her mind instinctively strove to remain in the refuge of sleep, her pillow was wet with tears before the sun was fairly up. She struggled bravely through the day to dismiss all thought of Arthur; but the moment her vigilance was relaxed, he was present in her mind. Worse than this, she discovered that each time Mr. Yates recurred to her memory it was with an ever increasing pang, followed by a repugnance which magnified all of his obnoxious characteristics. She was beginning to hate her betrothed with an intensity that frightened her, that made her lose all confidence in herself and her ability to guide her own actions. She became uneasy at the strength of her own emotions. She looked back with longing to the calm confidence and peaceful purity of the past, before the blight of the world's wickedness had touched her. Turbulent passions were but vague words to her then, and she remembered now how she had given her pity and sympathy to those whom the world condemned, saying innocently that they might have been tried beyond their strength. Would she be one of these? She was beginning to understand now how crime was born, and the knowledge appalled her.

When, at last, this first, long, weary day of her trial came to an end, she was heart-sick of the present and in despair of the future. Although she had not confessed it to herself, she had been

buoyed up all through the twenty-four hours by the hope of Arthur's coming once more. She did not stop to think or argue that having dismissed him and bidden him farewell, she could not reasonably expect him to return; she did not search for excuses on which he might presume to see her again despite her orders to the contrary; she simply believed that he would come. And when night fell and he did not come, she bitterly reproached him in her heart. Yes, the game of life had proved beyond her power to play and there was no help for her.

The morning of the day following, as Gertrude sat in her own room gazing drearily out of the window, the maid came to her with the announcement that her Aunt Catherine was down-stairs.

"Did she ask for me, or for Aunt Mary?" said Gertrude, unwilling to see anyone, especially Arthur's mother.

"She asked for you, miss," said the girl. "She said she wanted to see you particularly."

Asked to see her particularly! What could that mean? And giving a startled glance at herself in the mirror to see that her face did not betray recent tears, Gertrude went down-stairs with a beating heart. There was a small room back off the library and separated from it by heavy curtains, known in the family as the study, a retreat used for that and other purposes requiring privacy. It was here that Gertrude found her aunt. It was only when that lady advanced to meet her, saying quietly, "I am glad to see you back, my dear," that Gertrude remembered that she had not seen her since her return, and that there was not the least cause for alarm. This thought rather disconcerted her, and her embarrassment did not escape Mrs. Arlingford's alert gaze, but was immediately attributed by that lady to the subject which had brought her there. Gertrude, seating herself with her back to the light, as she recalled with distress the pale face and hollow eyes that had looked at her from the mirror, quickly recovered her composure and entertained her aunt with commonplace remarks for several minutes. Then she gradually became aware that there was something more than a simple desire to welcome her home instigating this visit. Mrs. Arlingford's diplomacy had always been the subject of affectionate jests with Gertrude and Kate. Her acting was so very transparent, her motives could be seen about as plainly through the veil as without it, and now Gertrude could see that her aunt was agitated by some secret mission, and, on her guard, she waited for it to develop.

"Are you glad to get back, my dear?" said Mrs. Arlingford, finally.

"Yes," replied Gertrude; "it is pleasant to be at home."

"You are not looking quite so well as I hoped you would," said Mrs. Arlingford.

"I have had a headache for a day or two," said Gertrude. "How well Kate is looking," she continued, turning the conversation from herself.

"Yes; Kate is very well and very happy too, as, in fact, she ought to be. She is going to marry the man that she loves." And Mrs. Arlingford changed color as she made this bold stroke.

But Gertrude calmly answered, "Yes, of course. When does Mr. Langdon return?"

"In about a month," replied Mrs. Arlingford. "You were fortunate in having him to cross with you, and Arthur to bring you back."

"Yes," again assented Gertrude; "they were both very kind. Of course you are delighted at having Arthur home once more?"

"I would be, Gertrude," said Mrs. Arlingford desperately, "except that we have lost him so quickly."

It was Gertrude's turn now to change color. "Lost him!" she exclaimed, looking at her aunt with a startled gaze. "How? Has he gone away?"

"No; he has not gone, but he is going to-morrow," replied Mrs. Arlingford, sadly.

"So soon?" murmured Gertrude.

"You expected it then?" said her aunt, quickly.

Then, as Gertrude made no reply Mrs. Arlingford arose, and seating herself on a low ottoman at her side, laid her hand on Gertrude's and said, "Why have you sent him away?"

"I?" said Gertrude, withdrawing her hand. "I don't understand you."

"Ah, my dear, it is of no use. I am his mother; you cannot deceive me. Arthur loves you, and you know it."

"And if he does," replied Gertrude, with dignity, "is it right that you should tell me of it?"

"Why not?" replied Mrs. Arlingford warmly. "Why is it not right?"

"Because I am engaged," said Gertrude. "You know that."

"I know," said Mrs. Arlingford, "that you have promised to marry a man you do not love. Oh, my dear," she continued, in a pleading tone; but Gertrude quickly interrupted her.

"Really, Aunt Catherine," she said, arising from her seat, "I don't know what your object is in bringing this matter up; but I hope you won't think me rude or unkind if I tell you that I must decline to discuss it. Aunt Mary is satisfied with the arrangement."

"I did not mean to assert any right, Gertrude," replied Mrs. Arlingford, with considerable spirit, as she also arose, "although surely all these years that I have loved you ought to give my advice some weight. I don't presume for a moment to counsel you against your aunt's wishes; because she is entitled to your obedience. But I am quite sure that she has your happiness at heart, and that if she thoroughly understood the matter she would agree with me, that Mr. Yates is not the man to make you happy. When I first heard of your engagement to him, I was surprised and alarmed; but I said nothing, because I did not understand it. I thought perhaps you loved him; but now I know you do not."

"I don't know why you should make such a statement as that, Aunt Catherine," said Gertrude.

"Can I not see it plainly enough?" replied Mrs. Arlingford. "See here, now, Gertrude, if you will tell me that you do love Mr. Yates, I will never say another word about it."

"It is not necessary for me to make any such assertions," said Gertrude, evasively. "Mr. Yates has my promise, that is enough."

"Oh, my dear!" said Mrs. Arlingford; "that is where you are making a fatal mistake. I do not ask you to tell me how you were led into giving that promise. You are young and inexperienced, and the fact that you do not love this man absolves you from it. It is a sin for a woman to marry a man she does not love; a sin that brings a lifetime of punishment. As I say, you are young; you do not know what you are doing. Gertrude, if your sainted mother were to come back on earth at this moment, she would forbid this marriage. You know that; in your secret heart you know it. Oh, my dear! listen to me. When, years ago, I first took you into my lap, a poor motherless babe, you put your little arms around my neck and called me mamma. I pressed you close to my breast and whispered that I would be your mamma; and that night, in my prayers, I promised your mother that I

would love and cherish you as long as I lived. I know that she was happier for that; and I have tried to keep my promise; I have tried as far as they would let me. Have I not?"

Gertrude, with a dreamy gaze blinded by tears, silently bowed her head.

"You used to come to me with all your little griefs and troubles," continued her aunt, greatly moved. "You used to confide in me; but in this one matter, which I have always had most at heart, you have avoided me. I could not force your confidence; but now that I know the truth, I feel as though I was not doing my duty, as though I was not keeping my promise to your mother, if I remained silent any longer. Oh, my darling! be guided by me! confide in me! will you not?"

"Dear Aunt Catherine," replied Gertrude, in a low, broken voice, "I have nothing to confide."

"You have nothing to confide?" said Mrs. Arlingford. "You will not own to the truth, then? Shall I tell it to you?"

And, as Gertrude made no answer, she went on hurriedly, recklessly. "You not only do not love this man you are about to marry, but you do love another; and that other is my son, Arthur Arlingford! Deny it, if you can!" she interrupted quickly, as Gertrude was about to speak. "Deny it, if you can!"

"Aunt Catherine," said Gertrude, coldly and gravely, "all this is very painful and unnecessary. My dear mother in heaven knows that I am doing what I believe is right, and no words can make me act differently. Don't let us talk any more about it; it will do no good."

And Mrs. Arlingford, as she stood a few moments in the silence that ensued, looking at the girl's face, realized that what she said was true; realized that her mission had failed. Her lips trembled and the tears slowly filled her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. Evading Gertrude's attempt to put her arm around her waist, she turned from her, and lowering her veil, left the room with a feeble step and drooping head.

For a moment, Gertrude's heart swelled with sorrow and pity, as she silently watched her aunt's departure; but the emotions of the past few days were wearing away her strength and exhausting her tears; she was becoming apathetic, almost indifferent to whatever might happen.

At last, arousing herself with a deep sigh, she was about to seek her own room, when a servant entered and said in a low tone,

"Excuse me, miss ; but Mr. Yates is in the library. He called while your aunt was here, and said he would not disturb you, but would wait in there."

"Give him my compliments," said Gertrude, "and say that I am not well and beg to be excused."

Then something in the expression of the maid's face awoke her attention, and she said in a lowered voice, "Stop a moment ; where did you say he was ?"

"In the library, miss," murmured the woman, with rather a frightened air, at the same time motioning to the adjoining room.

"In there ! Why did you not show him into the parlor ?"

Then, without listening to the girl's excuse, with a sudden impulse she advanced to the other end of the small apartment and drew aside the curtains.

Yes ; there was Mr. Yates standing in the middle of the room. One glance at his face was sufficient to confirm Gertrude's sudden suspicion. Undoubtedly he had overheard her conversation with her aunt.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PAUSING for a moment to rally her self-possession, Gertrude walked up to her betrothed, as he stood without making any sign of greeting, and herself throwing down the gauntlet, said with a certain imperious air, "Well!"

"Well," responded Yates, sullenly.

Then followed a significant silence. Yates was the first to break it. In a half defiant, half apologetic tone, he said, "I did not know you were in there. The servant told me you had a visitor, and I said I would come in here and wait till you were at leisure, and—and—"

"And you heard what was said," concluded Gertrude, finishing the sentence for him.

"Yes; I heard what was said," replied Yates, morosely. Then, with growing anger as he thought of it, he burst forth, "I heard what she said! I heard her say," and a nervous contraction of the throat causing him to swallow, checked his words, "I heard her say that her son Arthur loved you, and that you loved him, and that you could not deny it! And you didn't deny it!" Then, with another change in his voice, he added, pleadingly, "I could not hear what you said very well. Did you deny it?"

There was something pathetic in this swift appeal that might well have touched the heart of the woman, love for whom inspired it. But Gertrude had no pity to bestow, just now, and answered coldly,

"Under the circumstances, Mr. Yates, you can hardly expect me to go over the conversation again for your benefit after you have once listened to it."

"I did not listen to it!" cried Yates, angrily.

Gertrude simply shrugged her shoulders in reply.

Then, with a malevolent expression on his face, Yates walked up to Gertrude and said in a dogged tone, "Some day you will go too far with me. I can't stand everything."

But Gertrude, with a mood fully as reckless and defiant as his

own, faced him squarely with a steadfast look, beneath which his eyes slowly fell.

"Unless you can alter your manner," she said quietly, "I shall be under the necessity of asking you to leave me."

At this, Yates turned away abruptly and threw himself into a chair. Then, to Gertrude's surprise, his chin began to tremble, and tears stood in his eyes. The sight was a strange one to her, and for a moment she was moved by it, for a moment only, for, as she stood looking at him trying to think of some softer thing to say, he sprang from his seat and walked to and fro with disordered steps, exclaiming, "You have always treated me like a dog, and I won't stand it!"

"I don't think I have treated you badly," said Gertrude.

"Yes; you have, too!" he repeated, with a faltering voice, pausing to arrange a scarf that hung over the back of a chair. "You think I have no pride, that I have no feeling, but I have; and sometimes when you treat me as you do I don't know whether I love you or hate you the most!"

As Gertrude made no reply to this, he continued, "I can see it all plainly enough. I am not such a fool as you think I am. I know you think I am a fool. Yes, you do. Why did you make me love you? What did you lead me on for? Oh, I wish I was dead!"

"Mr. Yates," said Gertrude, "you ought not to talk that way; you have no reason for it. You know as well as I do that I have always behaved toward you with consideration. If I ever have hurt your feelings," she added, after a moment's reflection, "it was unintentional, and I am sorry for it."

"Sorry!" he interrupted, angrily. "What good does that do? I tell you I have done more for you—" here his voice broke, but recovering himself, he continued, "Your aunt knows all about it. Ask her. She'll tell you. She promised me more than a year ago that you should marry me."

"What?" said Gertrude, quickly, looking at him with a puzzled expression. "What did you say?"

"Never mind," replied Yates, recovering himself.

"But I do mind," said Gertrude, "and I insist upon knowing. It may make a great deal of difference."

"Will it?" cried Yates, grasping at her words with sudden hope. Then with a quick change of manner, he cried, "Oh, Gertrude, tell me that you don't love that man! Swear that you

will never marry him ; that you will marry me as you promised. Don't keep me in suspense any longer ! I can't bear it ! ”

“ Mr. Yates,” said Gertrude, irritably, “ you wear my patience out. Why should I swear any such things You have my promise, and that is enough.”

“ Then fulfil your promise ! Marry me ! Marry me, now ! ” cried Yates, excitedly. “ What is the use of waiting any longer ? Why not marry me now, this minute ? We have been engaged long enough. Put on your hat, and come with me now. Lots of people get married that way.” And he tried with feverish eagerness to take her hand.

But Gertrude drew back. “ You are talking nonsense,” she said.

“ You will not ? ”

“ No,” she answered ; “ certainly not.”

“ Then don't ! ” he exclaimed, suddenly, turning white with rage. “ Don't ! Go and starve with that midshipman, that cousin of yours ! I know that you love him, damn him ! I have always known it. I'm not blind ! You think you have a fortune, don't you ? But you haven't ! No ; you haven't ! You haven't a penny to your name ! I would have given it all back to you, and never said a word about it. But I won't now ! No ; I won't ! ” And in his fury he shouted the words at the top of his voice.

“ In heaven's name ! ” cried Gertrude, “ what do you mean ? ”

“ What do I mean ? ” repeated Yates. “ That your uncle robbed you of your fortune, and gambled it away at the club. That's what I mean. Your aunt told me that if I didn't say anything about it, you should marry me. And if you had married me, I would have given you back your money and never said a word about it. But I won't now ! By God, I won't be made a fool of any longer ! ” And rapidly pacing the room, gesticulating with his arms and moving his head from side to side, he kept repeating, “ I won't stand this any longer ! ”

As she listened to these revelations, Gertrude's face grew paler and paler ; the shadows under her eyes darker. Claspings her hands till the knuckles became white, she raised them to her trembling lips, and with her eyes full of frightened bewilderment, stood motionless, gazing at Yates. Then, suddenly starting into life, she threw her hands violently from her, and stepping in front of him, with her shoulders back, and her head erect, she cried passionately, “ Is this true ? ”

"Well," replied Yates, sullenly, alarm at what he had done beginning to replace his short-lived passion, "never mind whether it is or not."

But, with her eyes flashing and her mouth quivering, Gertrude said in a voice that vibrated with indignation, "Mr. Yates, our engagement is at an end! I will never marry you! Never! Never!" Then, drawing a long, sobbing breath, she cried, "Am I a thing to be traded for a debt? Oh, shameful, shameful!" And, resolutely repressing the tears that rushed to her eyes, she turned from him, and moved towards the door.

Then, for the first time she became aware that they were not alone. Her aunt was standing in the doorway. With one hand leaning against the frame and the other pressed against her heart, she looked strangely old and haggard.

"Aunt Mary!" cried Gertrude, with indignant protest in her voice, as she stopped. Then, extending her arms she said, imploringly, "Say that it is not true; that it is false! Oh, say that it is false!"

But Mrs. Arlingford slowly shook her head. Directing a stern gaze at Yates, who stood in the middle of the room biting his nails, she said, huskily, "They have heard you all over the house; but I am glad that you have broken your promise. I am glad that she is free at any price."

Turning her eyes once more toward the shrinking Gertrude, she extended her hand, with a beseeching gesture, while she silently essayed to speak.

For a moment, Gertrude returned the gaze with a pale, unmoved face; then her lips began to quiver, and she said, in a trembling voice, "How could you? Oh, how could you?"

Again Mrs. Arlingford endeavored unsuccessfully to speak; but, though her voice failed her, the mute beseeching of her gaze was more eloquent than words; it was a pleading so intense it seemed as though all the senses which were deserting her had rallied in her eyes.

"I loved you, Aunt Mary!" Gertrude cried, eagerly, advancing a step, while her outstretched hands clenched and unclenched themselves and her breath came with labor. "I loved you so!" And then, breaking down completely, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed passionately.

For a moment, with a look of hopeless misery, the poor old eyes regarded the pretty bowed head, and then suddenly dilating with

an expression of pain, they closed, a spasm crossed the pale face, and Mrs. Arlingford sank senseless to the floor.

At the sound of her fall, Gertrude sprang forward with a scream, and throwing herself beside her aunt, tenderly pillowed the gray head on her breast. Rocking to and fro, she cried, "She is dead! She is dead! And I have killed her! Oh, go for a doctor, some one! Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary, I do forgive you! Don't die before you hear me say that! Help, oh, help! Don't let her die!"

There was a movement of frightened women servants in the hall, where they had gathered at the unusual sound of Yates' angry voice. While one rushed for a doctor, another under the orders of Mrs. Arlingford's maid, brought pillows, restoratives, unfastened the prostrate woman's dress, chafed her hands, and did what their experience suggested to restore her.

The doctor arrived, and as he bent over the lifeless form, Gertrude, with her face hidden in her hands, knelt and prayed. Seconds passed, seeming like hours. The clicking of a glass tube against the senseless woman's teeth as the doctor dropped some medicine into her mouth, sounded loud in the stillness. There was no visible result, and again the medicine was administered. A faint flutter of the eyelids, just perceptible to the practised eye of the physican, and the doctor, with his fingers upon the patient's wrist, spoke for the first time. "Go, get her bed ready," he said in a low tone.

Gertrude raised her head, and looked at him wildly.

"She is rallying," he said, reassuringly.

Then Gertrude hid her face in the folds of her aunt's dress, and whispered between her stifled sobs, "Thank God! Thank God!"

Meanwhile, during the confusion, Yates silently left the house.

CHAPTER XLV.

IT was one o'clock in the afternoon of this same day. Major Arlingford and Arthur were sitting at luncheon with the pre-occupied and restless air of men whose daily routine has been disturbed by some unusual event. Although the ceremony of the meal had been observed, very few of the plates had been touched. The major, leaning back in his chair, meditatively cast a reflection of the sunlight from his eye-glasses on the polished surface of the mahogany table, while Arthur, with his elbow on the arm of his chair and his head upon his hand, played with his fork. At last Arthur threw the fork down, and raising his head, said, "I have half a mind to go over there and see if there is anything I can do."

"I don't think I would if I were you," said the major, soothingly. "Your mother and Kate are both there and the doctor promised me that if there was any change he would let me know immediately. You would only disturb them."

Another interval of silence followed, again broken by Arthur. "Don't you suppose that Aunt Mary must have had some sort of shock to bring on such an attack?" he said.

"Not necessarily," replied the major. "Although it can hardly be said that she is subject to them, she has had similar attacks before. In fact, she had one exactly like this, last spring." Then he added, not without a troubled look, "Your mother was there this morning, about eleven o'clock, but I understood her to say that she did not see your aunt because she was not feeling very well. She saw Gertrude, only. Then she had scarcely been home an hour when they sent for her with the news of your aunt's sudden illness."

"Gertrude is not very strong," said Arthur with hesitation, following his own thoughts, "I hope they won't let her tire herself out."

"That is just the reason I sent Kate to see her," replied the major. "Your mother told me that they could not get Gertrude

away from the bedside, for an instant, that she says she must be the first to speak to her aunt when she is sensible. I thought Kate would succeed in getting her to rest, better than anyone."

Then the two relapsed once more into silence. Presently a servant entered with a note. As his father hurriedly tore open the envelope, Arthur watching him closely, saw his face change. "What is it?" he said, anxiously, unable to restrain his impatience. "Is she worse?"

"It is not from them," replied the major, hastily, and then turning to the servant, he said, "Is the messenger there?" And on being answered in the affirmative he continued, "Tell him to say that I will come immediately."

As the man closed the door, the major, considerably agitated, turned to Arthur and said, "It is from Mr. Werther, an old acquaintance of mine, the proprietor of the Werther House, you remember, on Trenton square. He wants to see me immediately on important business. I wish you would remain here and if anything occurs send for me there." And not waiting for a reply he hastily departed, leaving Arthur, restless, anxious and miserable as he was, wondering what new mishap had occurred to trouble his father so perceptibly.

Meanwhile, the major, looking greatly disturbed and walking very rapidly, arrived at the hotel mentioned. Inquiring for Mr. Werther he was promptly ushered into that gentleman's private office.

"Now, then, Werther," said the major, as the door was closed behind him, "what is all this about?"

"Simply this, Major," replied the gentleman addressed, a stout, elderly man, looking very pale, "Mr. Yates has tried to kill himself."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the major, "you don't mean it!"

"I am sorry to say that I do," replied Mr. Werther, "and I am afraid that he has succeeded, too."

"Oh, dear, dear, dear!" cried the major. "This is dreadful! Go on, go on, man! How did it happen?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Major," replied the proprietor with nervous diffusiveness, "I don't believe Mr. Yates was ever what you might call a well-balanced man; not that I mean he was crazy, of course, but he was always a little queer, especially when he had been drinking. And after he came back from New York, a few days ago, he was stranger than ever, would hardly speak to

his old friends, and was so gloomy and ugly that the chambermaids were afraid to go into his room. This morning about eleven o'clock, Fred, the watchman, saw him go out and about twelve saw him come back. He told me that Mr. Yates looked very pale and walked rapidly, talking to himself and shaking his head from side to side as though he was upset about something, and altogether behaved so odd that he followed him upstairs. You see, I had warned my people to keep an eye on him. He went into his room and slammed the door after him, and then Fred heard him walking around, talking to himself excitedly for a few moments and then he heard him open the cupboard door and jingle the bottles. Fred thought he was taking a drink at first, but the next minute he heard the most awful yells and then a heavy fall, and dashing open the door he found Mr. Yates tied all up in a knot on the floor and screaming so that everybody in the house came running to the hall. Well, fortunately I was here and I sent for a doctor and cleared the room. Then we found an eight ounce bottle of spirits of ammonia on the floor, with only a few drops left in it, and there is no doubt that is what he took. The doctor says that the lining of his throat and stomach are completely burned out and that he cannot possibly live. It was dreadful to see the agony he was in," concluded Mr. Werther, taking out his handkerchief and wiping his white, fat face, "dreadful."

The major, who had sat with his hand shading his eyes, listening, finally looked up, his face, as he raised it, showing how much he was shocked. "Why do you think he tried to commit suicide, Werther?" he said gravely. "May he not have taken the ammonia by mistake? That seems to me much more likely than that a man should choose such a dreadful way of killing himself. Then, besides, what cause could he possibly have?"

"I thought of all that, Major, I thought of all that," said the landlord. "In fact it seemed so unlikely, that, not to do the poor fellow injustice, or make it unpleasant for his relatives, if he has any, or—or anybody who might feel interested in him, you understand, I let it be generally known that it was an accident. But," and here he lowered his voice still more, "the doctor questioned him as soon as he could, and Mr. Yates confessed that he was looking around for something to kill himself with, and when he opened the closet door the first thing he saw was the ammonia that he kept to clean his clothes, and he poured it down his throat

thinking that it would strangle him ; but he could not hold on long enough and had to scream."

"Horrible," said the major, "horrible ! How could the poor fellow be so foolish ?"

Mr. Werther tapped his forehead significantly.

"Has he asked to see me, or—or anybody?" asked the major.

"No," replied Mr. Werther, "he just lies there with his face to the wall and, strange to say, since the first outcry he has scarcely so much as groaned, though it is plain to see he is suffering frightful agony. The doctor says his endurance is something wonderful. He just lies there clenching his hands and with the sweat breaking out on his forehead in big drops. Indeed it is pitiful. When we ask him if there is anything we can do for him, he just shakes his head. Both the doctor and I thought that perhaps he might like to see you and that at any rate, under the circumstances, you had better know about it. So I sent for you."

"You did quite right, Werther, you did quite right, and I am much obliged to you. Now if you will send some one to show me the room I will go to him."

The landlord, himself, led the way upstairs and when he had pointed out the door the major softly turned the handle and entered the apartment. One glance at the yellow, drawn face of the sufferer, as he lay upon the bed with a blanket over him, was sufficient for the major to realize the terrible tale. Inexpressibly shocked, he was glad to turn away and converse with the doctor, although even then he felt the deep set, hopeless eyes fastened upon him like those of a dumb, suffering animal.

"He is growing weaker," said the doctor, in answer to the major's mechanical question, "he cannot live long. Oh, yes, he knows it ; in fact he refuses to take anything, he says that he does not want to live, that his life has been a failure. Poor fellow ! It is all very sad. I have done what I can to relieve his suffering, and he is wonderfully patient. It will be a great relief for him to die. If he lingers it will only be in great pain and he will die ultimately of starvation. Yes, it will be a mercy for him to die. I doubt if you can get anything from him, not but what he is quite conscious, but he is very taciturn. Will you speak to him?"

The major nodded assent, and approaching the bedside, said :

"Yates, my poor fellow, is there nothing that I can do for you ?"

Yates fixed his hollow eyes upon him, wistfully, but feebly shook his head in the negative.

"Is there no one you would like to see?" continued the major, kindly, taking his hand. Although he knew nothing of the cause of this fatal despair he felt a secret fear that it might have had its source in his own family. This made him reluctant to utter Gertrude's name. At the same time he also felt some responsibility and much pity for the man's condition, and strongly desired to comfort him with the only means his mind could suggest. And yet he dared not mention Gertrude's name, at least without encouragement. "Are you sure there is no one at all you would like to see?" he urged.

Still that mute reply in the negative.

"Is there no business that I can attend to for you? Is there *nothing* that I can do?" persisted the major, unable to understand how a man could die, ignoring all the ties of life.

No, there was nothing, and, as though to avoid further questioning, Yates turned his haggard face to the wall.

"I am afraid that it is of no use," said the doctor. "He is beyond caring for anything, and it only disturbs him; he is suffering enough without that."

"It is awful," said the major, turning away from the bedside, very much affected.

"I have an engagement," continued the physician, looking at his watch, "I suppose we had better send for a nurse. The fact is, I can do nothing more."

"There is no need of a nurse," said the major, "I will stay. God forbid that the poor fellow should think he had no friend to be with him at such a moment."

And as the afternoon waned and he sat alone by the bedside with his own solemn thoughts, the major felt that the dark eyes were often turned upon him in their anguish, and that the forlorn, tormented being was not ungrateful for the companionship. The major had never had much liking or admiration for Mr. Yates, but now that the poor life had been so sadly shattered he felt a great pity for the very faults and weaknesses which had characterized the man. Moreover, as has been said, although he knew nothing of Yates' connection with the events of the morning, he had an uneasy suspicion that some untoward check to his love affair had precipitated this catastrophe. While he earnestly hoped that no blame could be laid upon any of his family, the

major was quick to recognize the possibility, and he was not one to shirk his responsibilities. More than once he tried to talk to the sufferer, tried to induce him to vent his feelings or give some explanation, but in vain. The only response was that hopeless movement of the head.

The afternoon passed, the sun set and darkness slowly descended over the city. The major, lost in a sad reverie induced by the hour and the occasion, had almost forgotten where he was. Suddenly the heavy breathing to which he had become accustomed was broken by a peculiar noise, which the old soldier had heard many a time before while watching by the death bed of a comrade. Rising with a quick foreboding, he lit the gas, and returning to the side of the bed, found that Yates was dying. The major raised his head, and took his hand, and helped him through the struggle as best he could. And when the pain was over, and the spirit was leaving the body, a look of gratitude and relief came to the troubled eyes, and so it ended. Mr. Yates had at last attained a dignity greater than life could give, the dignity of death.

CHAPTER XLVI.

WHEN Major Arlingford returned home from witnessing the sad termination of Yates' existence, his first thought was to shield his sick sister-in-law, and Gertrude, from the shock of the tidings. As Gertrude confined herself closely to her aunt's bedside, and either Mrs. Arlingford or Kate, to whom the major confided so much of the occurrence as was necessary to effect his purpose, was constantly on guard in the sick room, this was not a very difficult matter to achieve.

It was not, however, so easy for the major to keep the world in ignorance, as, in view of Gertrude's relations to the deceased he would fain have done. Before the breath had well left Yates' body, rumors of all sorts, born of his sudden death, went flying through the town. The actual truth, indeed, was guessed and sent a-flying with the rest, but was finally disbelieved, and the more plausible falsehood put forth by the landlord of the Werther House was finally accepted as the reality. Not that society really cared a straw about Mr. Yates, personally, or whether he lived or died. Its interest arose solely from the very peculiar position in which his death placed Gertrude Alden in particular, and the Arlingfords in general. If Mr. Yates had killed himself, then any one of the various theories advanced to account for his desperate act might be true. It might be true that he had regretted his engagement and committed suicide rather than be married to Miss Alden; it might be true that Miss Alden had discovered at the last moment that he, Mr. Yates, already had a wife; it might be true that Mr. Yates had learned something wrong about Miss Alden's history, which always had been a little mysterious, that she was not an heiress after all, that she was not even the niece of Mrs. Arlingford, but the daughter of heaven knows who; in fact, any one of the many ingenious stories, which were eagerly retailed by mothers and daughters to account for the fact, that Mr. Yates had committed suicide, might be true, if Mr. Yates had committed suicide. But if, on the other hand, the coarse, terse explanation

of his death given by fathers and brothers was true, namely, "That Yates had been on a spree for a week and was looking for a bottle of chloral when he got hold of the ammonia, by mistake," if this was true, why, the less said about such a commonplace, vulgar affair, the better.

Although society, with its suave effrontery, did not hesitate to seek information in numerous afternoon calls on Major Arlingford's family, Mrs. Arlingford and Kate, under orders from the major, were discreetly reserved on the subject. There was no thought of disobeying the head of the house, now, among any member of that little circle, or of even questioning his judgment. Poor Mrs. Arlingford had been too badly frightened by the tragic termination of this affair into which she had so boldly thrust herself, ever to think of disobedience again. Not that the gentle lady had any knowledge of the part she had played in the matter; on the contrary, she believed that Mr. Yates' death was entirely accidental. But the memory of her effort to oust him from favor with the woman he loved, to ruin his happiness in a blind effort to secure the happiness of her son, was, in the face of this disaster, a source of tearful remorse to Arthur's mother. Her husband understood this so well that he took every means to keep her in ignorance of the truth, lest the sensitive mind of his wife should be forever haunted by such an accusing ghost as the story of the suicide would inevitably raise.

For whatever responsibility might exist for the deplorable occurrence, the major had instantly decided that no good purpose could be served by letting the truth escape to parade itself in the guise of a lifelong reproach to any of his family. When therefore the shocking event was broken to Gertrude by her Aunt Catherine, that lady was so convinced of her own belief in the accidental nature of Yates' death, that she finally convinced Gertrude. As for the widow of Henry Arlingford, she was for a long time excluded from all knowledge of the event, her recovery being so slow and uncertain as to necessitate extraordinary precautions against the least excitement. In fact, she was never again able to resume her former habits, but was confined to her room, an invalid, for the few remaining years of her life.

Notwithstanding her eagerness to atone to her Aunt Mary for her tacit refusal to pity and pardon her, Gertrude did not dare, under the circumstances, to make the slightest reference to Yates or the scene which had caused her aunt's illness. But, from the

moment the stricken lady had regained her consciousness until the day of her death, she was never for an instant allowed by Gertrude to doubt the fulness of her love and forgiveness. From the moment the faded eyes had opened, Gertrude's had met them with a look which was like balm to the tired, sorely-tried heart, and at last brought it peace, if not happiness. No words were needed, for Gertrude freighted every act, every glance with the message of love. Words might have wrecked the precious cargo.

The various emotions experienced by Gertrude, on hearing of the sudden death of the man from whom she had parted in anger and contempt, it would be difficult, perhaps fruitless, to analyze. Youth is a period of heroics. It is always leading a forlorn hope with admirable fool-hardiness, with sublime folly. Gertrude was in conflict with life, and valiant self-sacrifice was her only weapon. The shock to her pride in discovering the bargain of which she was the subject was so unexpected, so mean and inglorious in comparison with her exaltation, that it confused and humiliated her. All the standards and ideals of her life were shattered. In peremptorily freeing herself from her engagement to Mr. Yates, her love for Arthur had not entered her mind. Before that thought came to her, before she could take that joy in her freedom, she was confronted by the awesomeness of Yates' sudden death. Then pity gradually replaced her anger and disdain for the man who had died. His repugnant qualities receded and the fact that he had loved her, alone remained prominent. She was not without remorse, thinking of that unhappy, distorted life, and in many sad communings with herself, she questioned whether she had done her duty well.

After time had passed and softened her experience, and her existence had adapted itself to a new perspective, she was somewhat chastened and subdued; somewhat of her imperiousness deserted her, thereby adding to her character a more subtle charm of womanhood. Her love for Arthur, and, too, his love for her, was made deeper and better for this lesson, in the seriousness of life.

The task of disclosing to Mrs. Arlingford the sequel of her efforts to shield her husband's name from obloquy, was a delicate, if not a dangerous one. It was necessary, however, when she had become convalescent, that she should be informed of Yates' death lest some injudicious acquaintances should betray the fact without care or warning.

It was Gertrude who broke the intelligence to her, and gently and lovingly the task was done. When at last the final word was spoken, Mrs. Arlingford's feeble head was bowed upon her breast, her pale, thin hands crossed in her lap, and Gertrude, who stood anxiously watching the effect of her disclosure, saw that she was praying. As time went by, all but Gertrude, were satisfied that the shock had done no harm, but she, from close observation of her aunt, detected a growing restlessness which alarmed her. In answer to her solicitations, Mrs. Arlingford at last acknowledged that certain business matters were weighing upon her mind and after much persuasion reluctantly consented to confide in Major Arlingford. Having once consented, however, she was feverishly anxious for the conference, and when her brother-in-law arrived in obedience to Gertrude's summons, she proceeded directly to the point, though not without first saying, somewhat grimly, "It is the first time, Thomas, that I have ever asked your help. But there, perhaps, I have been wrong, God knows. I want you to tell me," she continued, "who are Mr. Yates' executors."

"Well, my dear," replied the major, "so far as I am informed, he did not appoint any. In fact he left no will and his affairs, altogether, were in great confusion. My impression is that when his business was wound up there was very little to dispose of."

"But was he not rich?" said Mrs. Arlingford, staring at him in sudden wonder.

"No," said the major, "he undoubtedly thought that he was, but, as I say, when it came to clearing off his indebtedness and winding up his business, there was not much left. It often happens so," continued the major lightly, noting the bewildered look with which his information was received, and attributing it to a wrong cause, "when a man is in active life and reputed wealthy, a sudden closing of his projects is in itself disastrous, and often reveals a surprisingly different result from what was anticipated. Besides that, poor Yates was very wild in his investments during the last few years. He seems to have acted on caprice and impulse, and there are always plenty of men ready to take advantage of imprudence. In fact it does not take long to lose a fortune."

"And he left nothing, you say?" persisted Mrs. Arlingford, still staring at him blankly.

"Well," replied the major, "compared with what he was

supposed to be worth, it was nothing; some twelve or fifteen thousand, I don't think it was more."

Mrs. Arlingford relapsed into silence with such a strange look upon her face that the major grew uneasy, and hurriedly clearing his throat began with an effort, "I suppose that you are thinking about his being the trustee of Gertrude's fortune, but there is no occasion to worry about that, my dear, you can dismiss it altogether from your mind; I have taken all the necessary steps to insure the safety of her money."

But the effect of his announcement instead of being calming, as the major expected, agitated Mrs. Arlingford still more. She turned upon him sharply and stared aghast. "What do you mean?" she cried. "In God's name what have you done?"

"Why," answered the major, surprised in his turn, as well as somewhat disconcerted, "I—that is, poor Henry, before he died, asked me to keep an eye on Gertrude's inheritance, and when I found that Mr. Yates had died without appointing a successor for the trust, I made application to the courts and was appointed guardian. Of course I should have spoken to you about the matter, only you were not well enough to be bothered with business; and after all, it is a mere form, you understand, because Gertrude will be eighteen next month and then I shall have to turn the money over to the young lady herself. I hope you are not displeased."

Mrs. Arlingford slowly shook her head. "She will get the money when I die, Thomas Arlingford," she said, "when I die, not before; though she won't have to wait long, not long."

"But I don't understand, my dear," said her brother-in-law, gently. "The terms of her mother's will are that she is to have it at eighteen or when she marries, and it is all ready, principal and interest, in government bonds."

Mrs. Arlingford suddenly grasped the arm of her chair with her bony hands and bending toward the major, peered into his face with intense eagerness. "For God's sake, what do you mean?" she cried, in a constrained, agitated voice. "Did he not—my husband—did he not lose it?"

Gradually the major's face fell. "You know it then?" he said slowly, regretfully. "Why need Henry have told you! I warned him not to."

Mrs. Arlingford's hands relaxed and she sank back in her chair with a face from which all the life of a moment before had faded,

leaving her grayer and older than ever. "So!" she muttered, "I see it all. He confided in you first. He always did." Then with something that could scarcely be called a laugh, she added, "I might have known it!"

The major made no reply. Slowly a tear made its crooked way down the furrows of her cheek. It was hard to have this one wretched memory torn from her. Presently raising her head wearily, she said: "And that is why you have been so poor. Because you were replacing the money my husband—"

She faltered and the major interposed; gently, "There was nothing else for me to do. He was my brother. His honor was mine. It was only right and just that I should repair the wrong. It would not have been fair to saddle you, a woman, with such a burden. Believe me, that was the only thought I had in advising him not to tell you. As for our being poor," he added lightly, "I am sure that none of us have ever suffered for anything."

"I understand, I understand," she said feebly, nodding her head, with a far away look that sorrowing age takes on. "You are a good man, Thomas Arlingford, an honorable gentleman. I used to hate you sometimes for being what he was not. That is why I would not tell you his secret when he died. I thought that, at last, he had confided in me, solely, me, his wife. But I was mistaken. I thought, poor fool that I was, that I was wise enough and strong enough to manage the wretched affair alone and so deserve his confidence. But I have been fooled, and betrayed, and rendered miserable, very miserable," she added in a broken voice, "all to no purpose." Recovering herself she continued. "Don't think that because I have seemed to live extravagantly while you were economizing, that it was because I was indifferent; it was a part of my poor plan. I dared not let Gertrude suspect. And now," she continued, pressing her hands to her eyes, with an impatient gesture, "the bitterest part of it is to think that I, who have ninety thousand dollars, must stand idly by and see you rob yourself, to pay my husband's debts of honor!"

"My dear Mary," said the major soothingly, "your father acted wisely in giving you the income of your fortune only, otherwise it might and probably would have been all gone by this time, and that indeed would have been unfortunate. I really do not need the money now. Kate, as you know, is soon to be married to Mr. Langdon, who is quite wealthy, and Arthur is able to support himself. What is more, from what the boy tells me, it seems the

money will come back into the family again. I understand from him that he and Gertrude have always loved each other very dearly, and that although separated by an unfortunate misunderstanding, they will, with your consent, some day be married. So, you see, by giving your niece to my son, you more than repay me, for when Gertrude marries Arthur, one of the dearest wishes of my life will be realized. Everything has turned out all right, and we won't worry about it, any more."

"I will gladly give my consent to Gertrude's marrying Arthur," replied Mrs. Arlingford. "But," she added, bending her gray brows with a determined expression, "not until I die will it be, as you say, all right. Then I shall make it right so far as the money is concerned; as for the rest"—a long, tremulous sigh told the story.

For awhile she sat leaning back in her chair, her eyes fixed dreamily on vacancy and her hands clasped in her lap; presently her lips trembled and once more the tears dimmed her eyes. "If he had only told me that you knew," she whispered. "It is so hard to think that all that has been endured and suffered was wasted, useless, unnecessary."

"My dear," replied the major, gravely, "I am not, as you know, a religious man, and I have few beliefs. But one of them is, that no suffering endured for the sake of others is useless, or wasted, or even unnecessary. The necessity may not be apparent, but be sure that it exists in some life, somewhere, and that our endurance achieves far nobler purposes than the attainments of our own personal, selfish ends."

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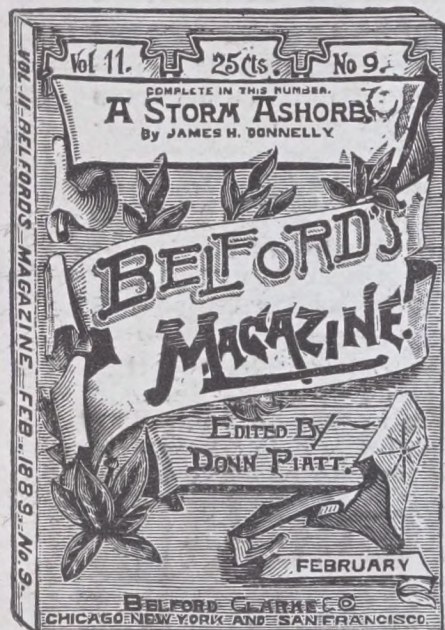
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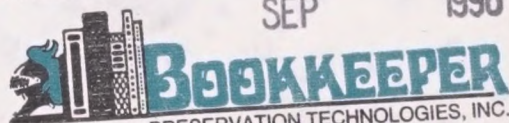


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